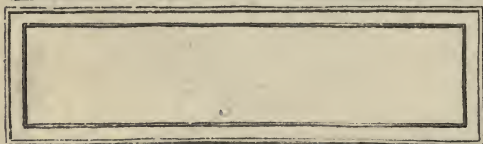
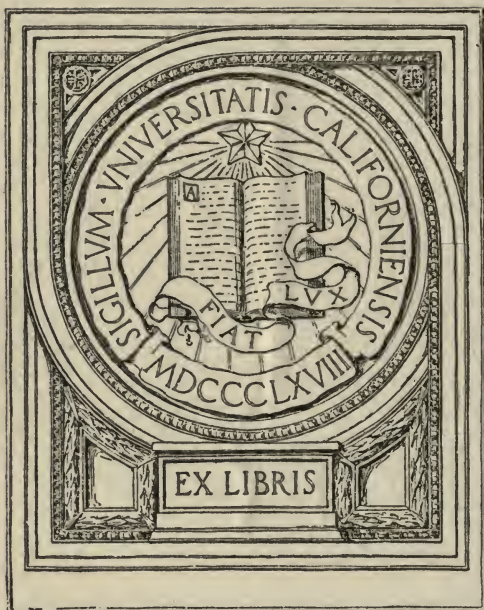
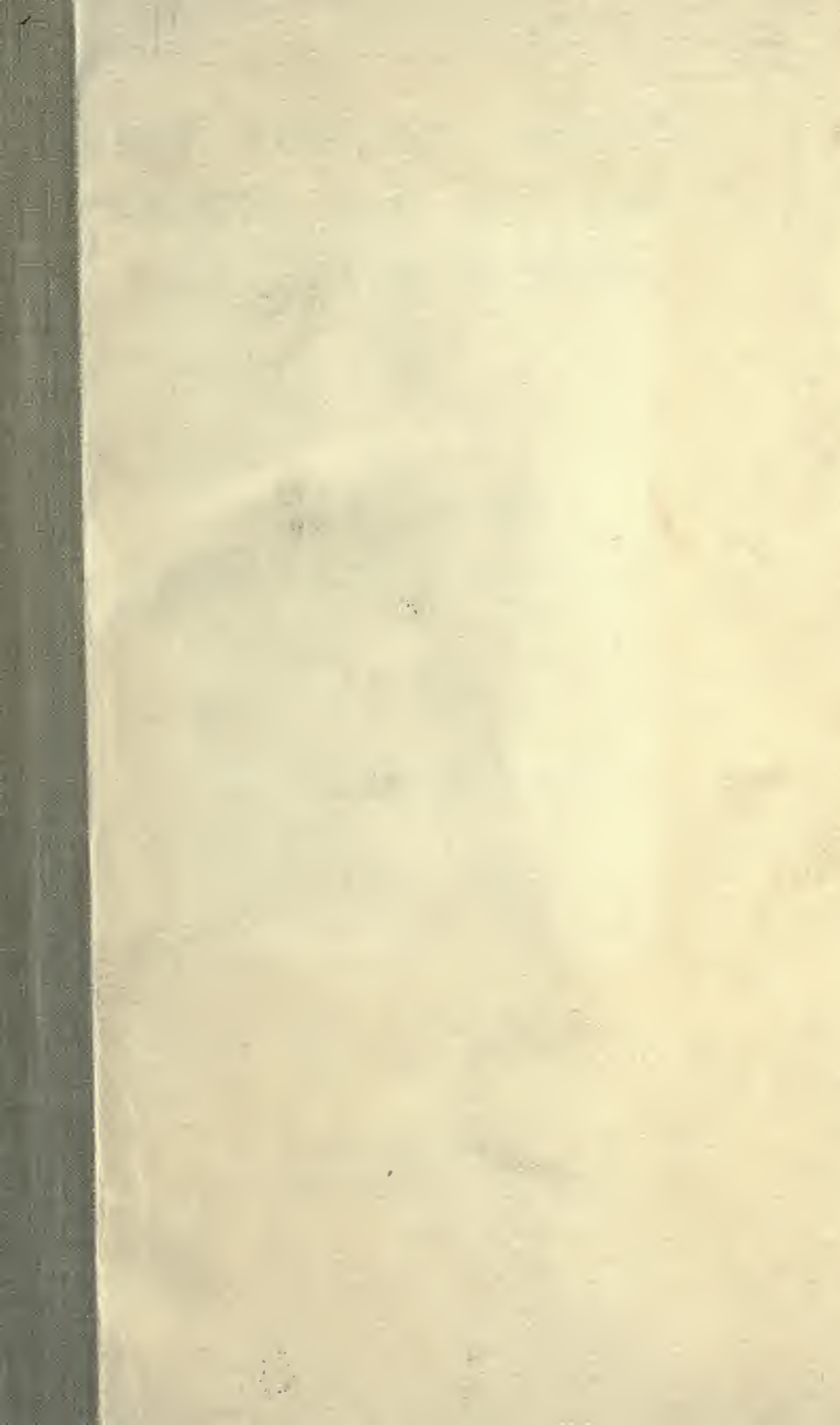


SOME RUSSIAN HEROES
SAINTS & SINNERS

SONIA E. HOWE







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SOME RUSSIAN HEROES SAINTS AND SINNERS

LEGENDARY AND HISTORICAL

BY

SONIA E. HOWE

AUTHOR OF ¹¹

'A THOUSAND YEARS OF RUSSIAN HISTORY,' "THE FALSE DMITRI:
A RUSSIAN ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY"

WITH FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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NO. 10111
ALPHABETICAL

TO THE MEMORY OF ALL HEROIC SOULS
THAT HAVE ENRICHED THE STORY OF RUSSIAN LIFE
IN THE PAST
THESE TALES ARE OFFERED
AND
IN HONOUR OF THE PATIENT, GREATLY DARING
RUSSIAN SOLDIER OF TO-DAY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

WHILE my first book, *A Thousand Years of Russian History*, was an attempt to trace on a large canvas the broad outlines of Russia's political development, and to sketch in the figures of rulers who stamped their personality on their era, this volume aims at the elaboration of some of these portraits, and also at filling in other, secondary, figures which give fulness to the general effect, and life to the picture.

As Russia has so many more national heroes, legendary as well as historical, than those portrayed in the following pages, the qualifying word "Some" had to appear in the title. There are many other martial heroes whose deeds are chronicled in the annals of her history, as well as numerous noble and heroic souls whose names stand for all that makes life worth living; there is a whole galaxy of saints—not canonized by the Church—whose memory has been enshrined in the hearts of those who witnessed their Christ-like lives, and a gallery could be filled with portraits of interesting sinners.

The few characters set forth in chronological sequence in this volume must, however, suffice for the present. Of necessity only those historic personalities have been selected who are types of their generation and prototypes of the Russians of to-day. It may surprise some not to find special chapters devoted to Boris

Godounov and Avvakum; these I had prepared, but when my MS. was complete, the limits of space, which the publishers decided to adopt, made it necessary for me either to omit some chapters altogether, or to compress them all. I chose the former plan, but hope to publish the two monographs at some future time.

Since temperament changes little with the centuries, it is hoped that these tales may help to make the present generation of Russians better understood—the bravery of the fighting men, the patient endurance of hardship by the masses, the deep religious feeling of the people—no less than the moral courage and strength of conviction displayed by those who have suffered in the cause of liberty.

In order to convey a correct impression of the position the individuals portrayed in this book hold in the mind of the Russian people, and to give a true picture of their character and influence, not merely historical works or official records, but folklore and legend, as well as contemporary narratives and descriptions, foreign and native, have been searched out, studied, and in certain instances quoted *in extenso*.

The illustrations have been taken from various sources—initials and tail-pieces from ancient Russian MSS. and from contemporary works on Russia, while the plates are mostly copies of pictures by modern Russian artists.

My thanks are once more due to the same friends who so kindly assisted me in my first effort.

I hope, in a third book, to supply a more detailed background to the picture of Russian life; in fact,

to deal with the history of Russian civilization from the earliest period up to the time of Peter the Great, when Muscovy began to come into line with the West.

This series will, I trust, supply such information as may be desired by lovers of that Russia which is thus described by the poet—

“Never can the reason master,
Never shall the foot-rule measure
Russia's own peculiar essence—
Faith alone can fathom Russia.”

SONIA E. HOWE.

*St. Luke's Vicarage,
May 5th, 1916.*



CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	V
I PREHISTORIC RUSSIA	I
II OLEG THE WISE	14
III HOW OLGA, PRINCE IGOR'S WIDOW, AVENGED HIS DEATH, AND HOW SHE VISITED THE GREEK EMPEROR AT CONSTANTINOPLE	24
IV HOW VLADIMIR, "FAIR SUN," BECAME ST. VLADIMIR.	36
V PREDSLAVA AND GRADISLAVA, DAUGHTERS OF THE PRINCE OF POLOTSK	55
VI THE MONGOL INVASION AND ALEXANDER NEVSKI .	69
VII DMITRI DONSKOI AND THE BATTLE OF KULIKOVO	92
VIII SERGEI RADONEJSKI, THE "WONDERFUL OLD MAN".	108
IX IVAN THE TERRIBLE AND THE METROPOLITAN PHILIP	127
X HOW YERMAK CONQUERED SIBERIA	192
XI THE FALSE DMITRI	228
XII PATRIOTS ALL	291
XIII THE PROTOPOPE AVVAKUM AND THE BOYARYNIA MOROZOV	323
EPILOGUE	360
LIST OF AUTHORITIES	365

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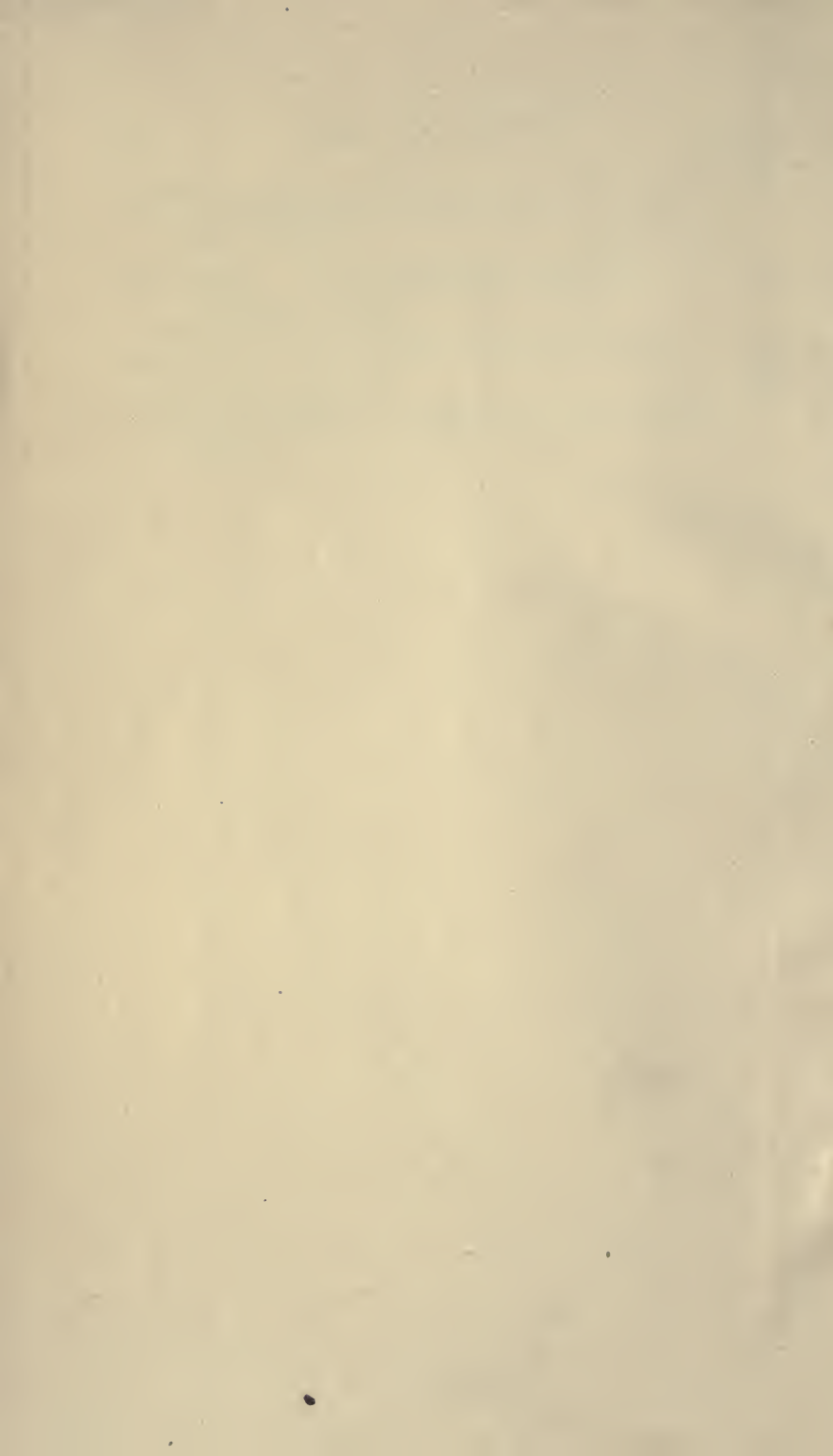
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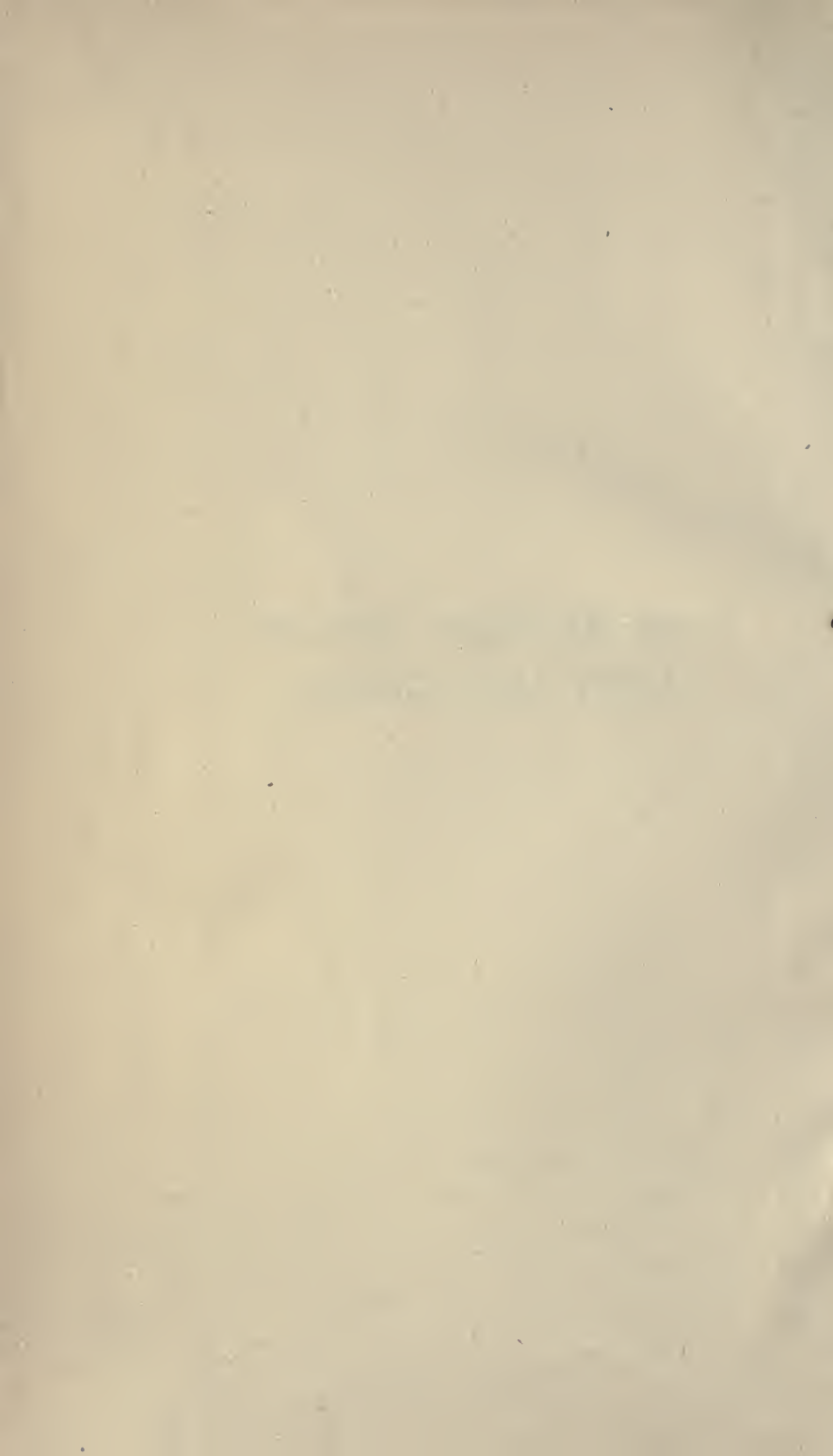
LIST OF PLATES

FUNERAL OF A RUSSIAN PRINCE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
From the fresco by G. T. Semiradski, on a wall of the Russian Historical Museum of Moscow.	
	<i>To face page</i>
OLEG THE WISE	18
From the drawing by Bilibin.	
PROCESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN OF SMOLENSK	30
In the Archangel Cathedral of Moscow.	
"BOGATYRI." THREE BOLD KNIGHTS	46
From the painting by V. M. Vaznetsov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.	
ALEXANDER NEVSKI BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE	80
From the painting by Kramskoi.	
DMITRI DONSKOI BEING BLESSED BY SERGEI RADONEJSKI	100
From the painting by N. Novoskoltsev.	
THE LABOURS OF SERGEI	118
From the painting by M. B. Nesterov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.	
THE LAST MOMENTS OF THE METROPOLITAN PHILIP	176
From the painting by N. Novoskoltsev.	
IVAN THE TERRIBLE	186
From the painting by V. M. Vaznetsov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.	
THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA	200
From the painting by V. J. Sourikov, in the Emperor Alexander III Museum, Petrograd.	
STATUE OF YERMAK	220
By Antakolski.	
ZAPOROGIAN COSSACKS	250
From the painting by J. E. Repin, in the Emperor Alexander III Museum, Petrograd.	

	<i>To face page</i>
"COMING"—A MOSCOW CROWD	270
From the painting by Ryaboushkin, in the Emperor Alexander III Museum, Petrograd.	
OLD MOSCOW. THE CATHEDRAL PLACE WITHIN THE KREMLIN IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY . . .	312
From a contemporary drawing.	
PRESENTATION OF THE CROWN TO MICHAEL ROMANOFF .	320
THE BOYARYINIA MOROZOV	340
From the painting by V. J. Sourikov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.	



SOME RUSSIAN HEROES
SAINTS AND SINNERS





FUNERAL OF A RUSSIAN PRINCE.

From the fresco by G. T. Semiradski, in the Russian Historical Museum, Moscow.

[Frontispiece.]

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

	PAGE
ARCHAIC GOLD ORNAMENT	I
Excavated in 1763 in the Cherson Government.	
SCYTHIAN TAMING HORSES	13
From a large silver vase of the fourth century B.C. excavated near the Dnieper.	
WARRIOR	14
From a fresco in the Cathedral of St. Sophia, Kiev.	
VIKING SHIP	23
GREEK GRIVNA, OR IKON	24
Worn on a chain, tenth century.	
CROSS	35
From the illuminated cover of a Byzantine Gospel of the tenth century.	
GROUP OF WARRIORS	36
From a fresco in the cupola of St. Sophia, Kiev, eleventh century.	
THE COIN OF VLADIMIR	54
Discovered in 1812. On the obverse is written: "Vladimir his Golden Coin"; on the reverse: "Jesus Christ."	
RUSSIAN PRINCESS	55
Fresco from the staircase in the Cathedral of St. Sophia, Kiev, eleventh century.	
ILLUMINATION	68
From a Russian MS. Gospel of 1164, in the Roumyantsev Museum, Moscow.	
CASTLE OF NOVGOROD, "WELIKI-NOVGOROD"	69
From an engraving in Olearius's <i>Travels</i> , 1635.	
TATAR ON HORSEBACK	91
From Ides-Isbrant, <i>Three Years' Travel</i> , 1706.	

	PAGE
WARRIORS RIDING INTO BATTLE	92
From the <i>Life of Boris and Gleb</i> , fourteenth century MS.	
BANNER OF DMITRI DONSKOI, WITH THE IKON OF OUR LORD	107
ILLUMINATION	108
From a Russian MS. of the Gospels, fourteenth century, now in the Voskresensk Monastery, or "New Jerusalem," in the Government of Moscow.	
CLERGY AND LAITY AT MEAL	126
From a fourteenth century MS.	
CHURCH OF VASSILI BLAJENYI, 1555-1560	127
THE TSAR IVAN RECEIVING VISITORS	191
From the MS. Chronicle <i>Tsarstvennaya Kneega</i> , describing the events of the reign of Ivan IV from the years 1533-1553.	
RUSSIANS CARRYING BUNDLES OF SABLE SKINS	192
Taken from the facsimile of a contemporary woodcut representing the Russian Embassy to Regensburg in 1576.	
RUSSIAN SLEDGE	227
From an engraving in Baron Herberstein's <i>Muscoviter Wunderbare Historien</i> , 1567.	
FOREIGN MERCENARY	228
By De Gheyn, after Goltzius, 1558-1617.	
THE SMALL PALACE	291
Built by Dmitri for himself and Marina, 1605. From Isaac Massa's <i>Histoire des Guerres de la Moscovie</i> , 1610.	
NIJNI-NOVGOROD	292
From an engraving in Olearius's <i>Travels</i> , 1635.	
CATHEDRAL OF THE TRINITY OF THE TROITSA-SERGEI MONASTERY	321
Built in 1423.	
FIGURE OF PRIEST	322
From an engraving in Baron Herberstein's <i>Muscoviter Wunderbare Historien</i> , 1567.	
LADIES DRIVING	359
From the MS. Chronicle <i>Tsarstvennaya Kneega</i> of the sixteenth century.	
THE USPENSKI SOBOR OF MOSCOW	360
Built by Fiorovante of Bologna in 1475-1479 by order of the Tsar Ivan III.	
DETAIL OF THE KREMLIN IN 1600	363

SOME RUSSIAN HEROES, SAINTS AND SINNERS

CHAPTER I

PREHISTORIC RUSSIA



ARCHAIC GOLD ORNAMENT.

DURING the course of centuries, many nations and tribes had swept like waves of the sea over the vast plains of South-eastern Europe. In the earlier years of the era with which we are dealing, the Slav tribes penetrated into Europe, settling on tracts of land deserted by the preceding races, who had either migrated further west or had ceased to exist altogether; and there, where in classic times the Scythians and Sarmatians had lived, the Slavs now became the predominant race. As time went on, some of these tribes pushed on further west, north and south,

and formed a wedge between the Teutonic tribes in the west, the Finnish in the north and north-east, and the Greeks in the south. During this process of colonization they absorbed certain of the Finnish tribes, permeated others, and in some cases, as in the Balkan Peninsula, they gradually ousted the original inhabitants. Between them and their Teutonic neighbours, however, no fusion was possible ; for there has always been, from earliest times, an insurmountable barrier of race antagonism.

Later on the Slavonic race split up into various nations, each consisting of many tribes, one of which the Polyans, or "People of the Plains," formed the nucleus of the future Russian nation. In close relation to the Polyans stood the Drevlyans, the Krivitchi, the Siviryans, the Tivertse and Dulibes, all of whom were eventually amalgamated into the Russian nation.

The cradle of this new nation was the narrow strip of land on the middle reaches of the mighty river Boristhenes or Dnieper, where Kiev now stands. It has been suggested that the name "Russ" was derived from the tributary of that name which flows into the Dnieper. The exact origin of the Russian people is, however, shrouded in mystery, and authentic information concerning the Russians of prehistoric days has come down to us only through the writings of certain Byzantine Emperors or through reports of Jewish and Arab merchants ; for the earliest contact between the Slavs of the Dnieper region and other nations appears to have been primarily commercial.

There on the northern shores of the Euxine, where

Balacava, Inkerman and Perekop now stand, first Phœnician and then Greek colonists had penetrated into the hinterland. Inside the funeral mounds (*tumuli*) of the earliest periods, archæologists have found evidence of this intercourse with ancient Greek civilization.

At a later date it was Byzantium which sent her merchandise into South-eastern Europe, and Byzantine silversmiths and goldsmiths wrought curious devices for the Slavonic barbarians, who loved to adorn themselves with enamelled or jewelled ornaments and with gorgeous silks woven by Greek hands. Byzantine merchants were, however, forbidden to sell to the Russian traders any roll of silk material worth more than fifty pieces of gold ; evidently such rare silks were to be kept for the exclusive use of the Byzantine *élite*. In return for these articles of luxury, the Russian merchants brought to the great city on the Bosphorus the more homely products of their native country—woodwork, honey, wax, furs, linen, and, last but not least, slaves.

The middle-men for the slave-trade were mostly Jews ; the fair Russian maidens of whom they had to dispose were much in demand, and their charms have been vividly described by Persian connoisseurs of female beauty.

In order to reach the world-market of Byzantium, Russian traders had to undertake a long, tedious and perilous journey in little boats which the forest-dwellers prepared by thousands during the long, dreary winter. In spring-time these were brought to Kiev, the commercial and, later on, also the

strategic centre of the new State—the “Russian Land.” There merchants from all parts of the country met, and, having purchased at a kind of fair the goods brought thither by hunters and woodsmen, they provided themselves with boats and started off in large parties down the Dnieper to the great markets of the South.

These expeditions were by no means light or simple undertakings, but were full of danger and vicissitudes, for over the vast steppes on the eastern side of the river roamed the wild Petchenegs, who attacked and robbed the river caravans whenever possible, and in order to safeguard themselves against attack, the Russian merchants requisitioned the protection of armed men. It was not, however, only having to keep continually on the alert against the enemy that made the journey irksome, it was the nature of the river itself; at a certain point, where thirteen rapids made navigation impossible, the boats had to be taken out of the water and dragged along the banks, or even carried upon the shoulders of the men. Besides all this, the harassed merchants had to keep an eye on their human merchandise—the slaves—who were chained together in order to prevent them from escaping.

Thus, after a long, dangerous and wearisome journey, the Russians at last reached the open waters of the Black Sea—the “Russian Sea,” as it was called by the Arabs.

When the perils of the journey were over and their destination reached, the Russian traders proceeded to settle down in the quarters set apart for them outside

the city of Byzantium, for, as time went on, the Greeks began to fear lest their barbarian customers should settle down and form a permanent colony within their city.

The few descriptions extant regarding the life and customs of the early Russians vary according to the period in which their Greek, Arab or Jewish contemporaries came into touch with them. Yet all agree in their reports as to the physical characteristics of this race, which was said to be tall, handsome, fair-haired and rosy-cheeked. Good-natured and humane in ordinary life, these Russians were reported to be fierce and cruel in warfare, but never treacherous; warrior-like and brave, with great powers of endurance, "they were," as a Greek writer said, "conquerable only through their internal dissensions." The same writer speaks of the proverbial love of freedom which was, however, a frequent cause of national weakness. Evidently, each individual had an innate objection to subordinate his personal opinion to that of the community, and this led, only too naturally, to quarrels, and resulted in a lack of solidarity which was made good use of by the enemy. It seems, in fact, that the Russian tribes never united unless threatened by a common foe. It was also said of them that in order to arrive at a lasting understanding, "fear and presents" were far more effective than treaties, as the Russians seemed to dislike tying themselves down by agreements.

The love of freedom showed itself also in their treatment of captives of war, who were kept as slaves only for a limited term of years, and then were given

the option either of returning to their own country or of settling among their captors as free men.

The Russians were also renowned for their hospitality to strangers, and it was even the custom for the host, on the departure of a guest, to accompany him on the journey in order to ensure his reaching his next destination in safety.

The Slavs were a joyous, good-natured, warm-hearted, sociable race—a music and poetry-loving people. There was nothing gloomy either about them or their religious beliefs, which taught them to worship one great God, the Creator of the Universe. They believed, not in a blind fate, but in a destiny ordained by the will of God, and, to this day, the word for the future husband or wife is “the destined one.” They believed that by means of sacrifices and vows, which they were most punctilious in offering and fulfilling, the great God could be prevailed upon to grant their requests. This chief Deity was to them the director of all natural phenomena, and the other lesser gods which they worshipped were considered as spirits emanating from him. They were, so to speak, parts of him and not his rivals.

Thus the Russians worshipped both a sun-god and a rain-god—the creative and regenerating powers. To their honour and glory they sang songs and held feasts, with music and dancing. In December, after the shortest day, they celebrated the re-birth of the sun, and in spring the regeneration of life. On June 24, the great feast of Kupela and Marena, the genii of fertility, was held. On that June night they believed that the secrets of nature were revealed to man ; it

was then that he could understand the language of animals, that the fern blossomed, and that hidden treasures became visible. In that warm night, so full of wonder, big fires were lit ; and men and maidens, decorated with leaves and flowers, danced round the flames, jumping through them, in dedication of themselves to the two spirits of the feast.

Of Perun, the chief of the lesser gods, whose special domain was thunder and lightning, they occasionally made images in human form ; representing him as a man holding a shield and having an eagle with outstretched wings perched upon his head. They prayed to him in the forests and under gigantic oaks, where nature reigns supreme, and where the trunks of the trees form the pillars of temples not made with hands. They worshipped Volos, the god of cattle, or of wealth, since to an agricultural people cattle meant riches. They also believed in nymphs and water-sprites who were supposed to inhabit springs, wells and rivers, bogs, and hollow trees. In fact, they personified the phenomena of nature and peopled forest and field with mysterious beings.

The Slavs required no priest, for every man sacrificed his own gifts, and every head of a household those of his family. There were, however, seers among them who could tell the future and interpret oracles. Every man prayed for himself : the merchant before starting on his journey offered up milk, bread, and other food, and with many genuflexions asked for a good sale for his wares, and on his return home he made a thank-offering and distributed food to the poor. The farmer prayed for his harvest, and, lifting up a bowl of golden

grain, would say, "Lord, Thou hast given us food, give it to us in abundance."

There can be no doubt as to their belief in a life after death, for their most solemn oath was, "If I do not keep my word, may I be a slave in this life and in the next." Life after death was merely a prolongation and continuation of existence, but in a land of light, warmth, beauty and good cheer. This Paradise, or "Rai," was believed to be a beautiful garden, full of trees, verdure and flowers, and to be the place where the migratory birds spent the winter. It was, however, imperative for the relatives of a departed warrior to provide his soul with all the requisites of daily life. Thus, domestic implements, weapons, musical instruments, together with his horse and dog, had either to be placed in the grave over which the funeral mound was raised, or to be burned with the corpse—whichever happened to be the custom of the neighbourhood. A wife, too, had to accompany her dead lord, and the opportunity to do so was given to that one of the many wives who professed to have loved him the best.

When the funeral mound had been erected, the family and friends of the departed would sit around it and feast and sing, or else listen to songs of his prowess ; while a year later they assembled to commemorate his death. At all their feasts the Russians sang and drank deep of the golden mead, but they drank also on other occasions ; in fact, the verdict of the famous Arab writer was that "the Russian rejoices in drinking and cannot do without it," and that "many a man was called away by death with the goblet raised to his lips."

Under normal conditions, the growing of "bread" occupied as important a place in the economic life of the Russians as did hunting. It was said at one time of the Slavs that they did not like the pursuit of agriculture, and that they preferred poverty and peace to plenty and trouble. That must have been in a period when nomadic tribes from the East were raiding their fertile lands, making settled life insecure. Two hundred years of quiet followed on that period of stress and danger, and during this time the Slavs of South-eastern Europe had become agriculturists. Then, however, new dangers arose from the warlike Khazars, a Turkish people inhabiting the land east of the Volga, who were ousted in the course of centuries by the fierce Petchenegs, while these again were replaced by the Polovtsi or Cumans. It was due to this state of insecurity that many Russians relapsed into a semi-nomadic condition of life, while others deserted the insecure plains and went further west to the forest zone, where they were less exposed to raids.

As there was always the danger of attack by these wild nomadic tribes, walled forts came to be built, into which the rural population could flee for protection when the need arose. As time went on these forts increased in number and size, for many people came to settle under their shadow, and thus in process of time cities developed.

Although the primary object of these forts had been strategical, they soon also acquired commercial importance; and those forts around which the greatest number of people settled gained the hegemony over the others, and thus their political ascendancy increased.

Many tribes, who were still living without any territorial or civic organization, gradually recognized the supremacy of these cities. In this manner important centres developed, such as Novgorod, on the Volkhov, near Lake Ilmen ; Smolensk, at the source of the Dnieper ; Pskov, on Lake Peipus ; and Kiev, on the Dnieper.

Greek writers comment on the fact that the form of government among the Russians was not at all monarchical, but, on the contrary, very democratic. Yet it was associated with patriarchal rule ; for, in point of fact, the Elders—the older and more experienced men—governed the cities, while the whole land was under the rule of a Council, or Vietcha, to which each town sent its representatives ; and whatever course of action the leading towns decided upon, the lesser ones had to carry out. Thus urban republics developed. It was in times of danger only that the cities required the services of a military chief, and then some man, renowned for courage and bravery, was chosen by the Elders to protect the town against an attack, or was bidden to lead the warriors against the foe. His duty was to ward off aggressive attacks by the enemy, and to protect the trade of the citizens, and for this purpose he frequently hired mercenary troops of Scandinavians. For these Norsemen, in the same way as they had settled on the shores of Britain and France, had also reached the shores of the Gulf of Finland. They had penetrated through the River Neva into Lake Ladoga, and from there they had gone up the River Volkhov into Lake Ilmen, where they had even temporarily conquered Novgorod, the chief city of the northern

Russians. Other "Varangians," as these Vikings were called, took service under Kiev, and accompanied her trade caravans to Byzantium.

As it not infrequently happened that members of the same family were chosen to be military chiefs, dynasties of "Knyazi" or princes developed, without, however, enjoying any territorial rights. The Knyazi who lived in the chief towns had to send their representatives to lesser forts, and thus a class of Governors was evolved—the Possadniki.

The whole population of the Russian lands was divided into tens, hundreds, and thousands, and over each unit there was a head man, the "thousandth man" often acting as the civic assistant of the military chief.

It was the possibility of securing a band of warriors ready to go anywhere in the hope of returning laden with booty, which enabled the military chiefs of Kiev and of other cities to undertake expeditions on their own account, and not only to follow the dictates of the city Elders. Thus, from being merely protectors, the princes became aggressors. They provided the Norsemen, who formed their personal following, with weapons and clothing, and gave them the opportunity of enriching themselves at the expense of the enemy. In this way, accompanied by their "Drujina," or band of friends, the princes made raids into neighbouring countries, and even into distant lands, such as Greece and the southern shores of the Black Sea, and as far as the Caspian. Having conquered new lands, they ruled over these by right of conquest; and thus, having enriched themselves by means of spoils of war,

and having become influential owners of territory, the elected military chiefs gradually became independent and hereditary rulers.

Although Novgorod was a great town, yet the greatest and richest among the cities of prehistoric Russia was Kiev. Of the rise of this far-famed city nothing is known, but tradition says that it was so named after a chief called Kee who had settled on the high banks of the river Dnieper. By the time the full light of history falls on Russia, Kiev was already the acknowledged political centre of the Russian lands, although paying tribute to the Khagan of the Khazars, whose capital was Itil, on the Volga. On their way to Byzantium the traders from the north had to pass by it, and the route from the Baltic along the Dnieper down to the Euxine was known as the "Greek Way." From the eastern side, too, a road led up to Kiev. Persia, and even India, sent of their treasures to this famous city from which a road went to the west through Galicia to the markets of Italy and Germany.

Within its walls and on the hills lived many rich patrician families of merchant-warriors. Gardens and orchards surrounded the town, into which the people of the outlying districts brought their produce. In the farmyards, fowls and pigeons, geese and swans provided food for the rich, while the forest-dwellers gathered the honey out of the hollow trunks of trees. The honey thus obtained went to the making of the golden mead for the feastings of the great. The wax was sold to the traders, and also the valuable furs which the huntsmen brought to the city—black fox, and white squirrel, sable and marten.

While the people worked, prince and bogatyr made war, hunted the boar and wild horse, or rode out to the chase, falcon on wrist. All, however, without distinction, whether peasant, hunter, merchant or prince, loved good cheer, dancing and music, and were brave, generous and hospitable.



SCYTHIAN TAMING HORSES.

From a fourth-century B.C. vase.

CHAPTER II

OLEG THE WISE



WARRIOR, FROM A FRESCO, KIEV.

TRADITION tells that to the hardy Norsemen of Scandinavia came messengers from the people of Novgorod, saying, "Our country is vast and fertile, but there is no order in it; come, therefore, and rule over us!" and, according to the chronicler, Varangians did not

hesitate to accept this generous invitation.

Thus it happened that only a few years earlier than the Vikings, Ingvar and Hubbar, said to be the sons of the great Scandinavian hero, Ragnar Lodbrog, were invading England, the Viking Rurik and his brothers, Sineus and Truvor, started for Russia. They left the shores of Scandinavia and, sailing across the Gulf of Finland and up the Neva, they entered the great northern lake; and where the river Volkhov flows into its crystal waters, Rurik founded, in 862, a town which he named Ladoga. To his brothers he gave Byelo-ozero and Isborsk, but as they died without

leaving any heirs, all the lands soon came again under his rule. Later on he left Ladoga, making Novgorod his capital and the centre of his dominions, whence his rule extended over many parts of Russia. Novgorod was surrounded by marshes and forests, and while the people living within the city were traders, those living around it were hunters, who brought thither costly furs which were carried south by the "Greek Way" to Byzantium, or down the Volga to Itil, the capital of the Khazars. There Arab merchants bought them to re-sell to the rich people of Baghdad, while in return the Russians purchased fine oriental blades and bright beads, much beloved by Russian women.

On his deathbed Rurik entrusted his principality and his infant son Igor to the care of his trusted friend and kinsman Oleg, as true and bold a knight as legendary hero ever was. Fierce and mighty, brave and adventurous, Oleg was just the leader whom both Varangians and Russians loved to behold and to follow.

Novgorod, however, under the grey northern skies, did not satisfy Oleg, whose imagination had been fired by tales of the beauty of Kiev and of the glory of Byzantium. Two bold Varangian knights, Askold and Dir, were at that time ruling over Kiev. Long ago they had left Rurik and gone further south, intending to go on to Byzantium ; but on their way thither they had taken Kiev and had made it their stronghold.

Kiev stood as a queen among the Russian cities. From it the two knights made many expeditions against Byzantium, sometimes by way of attack and sometimes for purposes of trade. In order to make friends with these barbarians from the north, and to come to terms

with them, the Greek Emperor Basilius gave them costly presents of gold and silver and silk garments, and in the hope of taming these "unconquerable heathens" he sent a Bishop to Kiev to preach to them the doctrines of Christianity. In 861, two hundred Russians were actually baptised. Among these was Askold the Viking, who, however, was less powerful than Dir, or "Al Din," described by the Arab historian as the chief of the Slav kings, and as possessing many populous and great cities.

Danger, however, was threatening Askold and Dir, for Oleg was irresistibly drawn towards the south, to sunnier climes ; taking the boy Igor with him, and accompanied by his faithful band of followers, the valorous knight started out for Kiev. They experienced many adventures on this expedition, till at last they reached that fair city on the high bank of the river Dnieper. On the other side stretched the endless steppes, decked in the full beauty of bright flowers, which made the meadows a joy to the eyes. Odysseus-like, Oleg decided to take possession of the fair city by guile, and therefore sent a message to her rulers, saying that some peaceful merchants from Novgorod, on their way to Byzantium, had arrived and craved hospitality. The unsuspecting chiefs came out of their walled city to hold speech with the far-travelled merchants, when suddenly they were surrounded by warriors, and Oleg, lifting the boy Igor on his shield, called out to Askold and Dir : "This is your liege lord, Igor, Rurik's son ; ye are but adventurers !" Before they could even think of defending themselves they were treacherously stabbed.

Thus Kiev fell into the hands of Oleg, who now forsook Novgorod for good, making Kiev his headquarters, from which he ruled the Russian lands.

Past Kiev flowed the mighty river Boristhenes or Dnieper, whose tributaries spread themselves like a network all over the country. Along these waterways travelled the boats of the traders bringing their wares to the fairs held in the city, which grew steadily in importance and power.

Not for long, however, was Oleg satisfied with having taken Kiev; his desire was for war and conquest, and thus, one after the other, tribes, peoples, and cities were conquered by him, all of which had to pay tribute, some in pieces of gold, others in furs. Many chiefs joined him, for this powerful leader of men attracted all who loved boldness and valour, danger and adventure. They rode with him to the hunt, and followed him on his expeditions. Clever and cunning, he was also a wise ruler: he built walled forts as shelters from the inroads of the dangerous nomadic tribes who roamed over the steppes, and entered into relations with other tribes, proving himself in every way a noble king. So wise was he, so far-seeing and shrewd, that the people called him Veshtchii—"he who sees."

Many years passed, and when Igor, Rurik's son, was grown up his guardian gave him a beautiful maiden—Prekrasnaya—to wife, whom Oleg named Olga, after himself. However, even after Igor had reached manhood, Oleg still ruled in his stead—and Igor was content that he should do so.

Although Oleg ruled in Kiev and was great and

mighty, he longed to see Byzantium, of whose beauty, riches and treasure he had heard so much. When, therefore, the Tsar of Bulgaria sent messengers begging assistance in his proposed attack on Byzantium, the valorous knight at once agreed to render it.

Thus he started on his famous expedition, of which in after years the bards used to sing. With eighty thousand men in two thousand boats, and accompanied by a great number of horsemen, Oleg, clad in shimmering armour, followed by his gallant Drujina, rode southward to victory. Unheeded was the tediousness of the river route, while dangers were welcomed.

As he one day approached the dark forest a wizard came out to meet him, and, addressing the old man, Oleg spoke thus : "Tell me, O Wizard, thou favourite of Perun ! what will befall me in the future ? Shall I, ere long, lie buried beneath the cool earth to the joy of my enemies ? Be not afraid to open up before me the future. As a reward I will give thee the choice of my horses." . . . But the wizard declined the offer ; for, fearless, true, and not to be bought was the seer, and thus he spake to Oleg : "Dark loom before me the coming years, but bright appears thy fate in my vision. Yet, take this my warning to heart. Victory, gain, and renown will be thine, and thou shalt hang thy shield on the gates of Byzantium. Water and land will favour thee, safe shalt thou be both from dagger and arrow, and no wound shalt thou receive in battle. Thy horse, too, will be fearless and brave, and will carry thee safe over the field of battle ; and yet death will overtake thee through this thy steed."

At these words Oleg smiled, then, growing pensive,



OLEG THE WISE.
From the drawing by Bilibin.

he jumped from his horse and, gently stroking the charger's beautiful neck, he bid his faithful friend a loving farewell. He entrusted the steed to the care of some servants, and bade them look well to its comfort. Then, mounting another horse, he proceeded on his way.

At last the Russian boats reached the waters of the Black Sea, having overcome all the difficulties of the Dnieper, and as they sailed towards the Bosphorus, news of the barbarians' approach reached the citizens of Byzantium ; fear seized the population, for the tales of former raids had taught the people to dread the Russians, and, true to their reputation, Oleg and his followers spread ruin wherever they went.

Nor did the manner of Oleg's immediate approach to the capital tend in any way to reassure the Greeks ; for gigantic kites in the shape of horses and snakes and men were sent up from the boats of the Russians, and, terror-stricken, the citizens beheld these monsters in the air.

Instead of meeting the enemy in fair fight, the Emperor trusted the safety of his city to a strange device : he caused a heavy chain to be stretched across the Bosphorus, in the hope of thereby keeping off the Russian ships. At this precaution Oleg the Wise only laughed ! Chains could not restrain him, and soon his cunning mind found a new way to victory ; he merely ordered his men to drag their boats on to the shore, there to put them on wheels, and then, with sails unfurled, they sailed over the dry land to the gates of the great metropolis.

In abject fear the Emperor now sent an embassy to

Oleg, with offers of food and wine ; but Oleg, fearing lest the gifts might be poisoned, refused to accept them. This foresight as to their intentions appeared superhuman to the Greeks, who now believed him to be Saint Demetrius in person ; and convinced of the futility of fighting against a leader who sailed over dry land, they asked for mercy and sued for peace, offering to pay him tribute. To this proposal the mighty prince readily agreed. The Emperor demanded, however, that Oleg's warriors should be kept at a safe distance from the city, and that envoys should be sent to arrange the matter. By these an agreement was drawn up, and arrangements were made as to the payment of the tribute. But heavy was the tribute demanded by Oleg, for not only for himself and all his men did he ask much gold, but also gifts for all those princes who had accompanied him on his campaign. He further secured great privileges for the Russian merchants, to whom were granted the right of free trade during their stay in Byzantium ; they were to be treated as guests of the city, which was to provide them with meats, fruit and wine. The merchants were also to have the right of visiting the public baths as often as they liked, and for the homeward journey they were to be provided with new ropes and anchors—in fact, with all that the merchants and sailors might require.

The Greeks, on the other hand, safeguarded themselves against the barbarous Russians by limiting the length of their stay in Byzantium to six months, during which they were given special quarters in a suburb on the island of St. Mamai. Welcome to arrive in spring, they were expected to leave these quarters in

autumn and to return to Russia. The merchants were forbidden to enter the capital singly, and were to do so only in parties of fifty, and then under the guidance of a Greek. In order to prevent any abuse, all merchants had to produce on arrival a letter from their Prince in proof of their being genuine traders, and also a silver seal, while political envoys had to bring one of gold. This agreement was sworn to on the part of Oleg by his weapons and by Perun and Voloss, his gods, while the Greek Emperor swore on the Gospel.

Before Oleg left for home he hung his shield upon the gates of Byzantium as a sign that he had exacted tribute from the proud city.

For the return journey the Russians made themselves sails of gorgeous silks, but the winds at once tore them to ribbons, and good strong Russian linen had once more to do service and carry the men back to their homes.

The chronicler reports that Oleg the Wise took away with him from Byzantium great riches, costly weapons and jewels, treasures and wines. He also states that Oleg and his hosts waged warfare as other warriors did in those days, for the times were cruel and barbaric.

The verbal agreement with the Greek Emperor was later ratified in writing on behalf of "Oleg, the Great Russian Prince, and all the Princes and great Boyars who were subject to him." This treaty, whether spurious or genuine, supposed to be the first written agreement ever drawn up by Russia, and intended to regulate the political and commercial relations of the two nations, was written in Greek and

Slavonic. One copy of the document was brought to Kiev, the other was kept in Byzantium, where the Emperor, greatly honouring Oleg's envoys, presented them with costly presents. In order to impress the barbarians with the greatness of the Christian Faith, they were shown the beauty and glory of the churches.

For thirty-three years Oleg reigned over Russia. He ruled men and conquered many peoples, and yet after all the wizard's prophecy with regard to the mode of his death was fulfilled. One day as he was feasting with his friends, and as they were talking of that famous expedition of five years earlier, he suddenly remembered the seer's words. When told, in answer to his question, that the horse had been dead for some years, he rode out to the place where its bones were said to lie. Tenderly the hero looked upon the bleached bones of his faithful steed, and gently putting his foot on the skull, he murmured, "Behold how false the prophecy! Here am I still alive, whilst thou art dead!" But even as he spoke a black snake secretly wriggled out of the skull, and with its poisonous bite fatally wounded the Prince. Thus in the year 912 Oleg the Wise died, as the seer had foretold. His friends buried him with honour, in great sorrow and grief. They raised over him a funeral mound, and, sitting around it, they solemnly bemoaned their loss. They lamented the death of so great a hero, and so beloved a man; they sang of his prowess and of his glorious reign; for was it not he who had made Russia great—he, whose rule extended from the rocky shores of the great lake Ladoga in the north to the sunny straits of the

Bosphorus? They talked of his courage and valour; for had he not been truly great, wise and strong, every inch a king, and one who knew how to win the affections of his people? Therefore it is not strange to read in the Chronicles which tell of Oleg the Wise that "the people wept for him with great weeping," and most bitterly was his loss bemoaned by Prince Igor and his wife, Olga the Beautiful.



VIKING SHIP.

CHAPTER III

HOW OLGA, PRINCE IGOR'S WIDOW, AVENGED HIS DEATH,
AND HOW SHE VISITED THE GREEK EMPEROR AT
CONSTANTINOPLE



GREEK GRIVNA, OR IKON.
Tenth century.

DURING the lifetime of Oleg the Wise, Igor, Rurik's son, had not troubled at all about his lands, for were they not well cared for by his guardian? But now that his guardian was dead, Igor took up the rulership. The country, however, soon missed the strong hand of Oleg, and

many of the tribes which he had conquered began to reassert their independence.

Desirous of following in Oleg's footsteps, Igor in his turn undertook an expedition against Byzantium, and crossing Bulgaria on his way thither, he and his warriors caused widespread terror by burning cities, monasteries and churches, and killing numbers of people. The Emperor was away in Asia Minor when

the Russian barbarians were threatening his capital, but Byzantium was saved by a miracle, for the faithful people brought the image of the Virgin to the sea, and as her robes touched the waters a storm arose which helped to destroy the enemy's ships, many of which had been burned by the Greek "fire" which was flung upon them from the shore.

In order to avenge this defeat Igor soon started on a second expedition, but before he had proceeded very far he was met by envoys of the Emperor. The effeminate Byzantine, fearing another invasion, and unwilling to resist it by force of arms, sent his emissaries to the barbarian prince with the offer of an increased tribute greatly in advance of that which Oleg had levied. The condition, however, was an immediate cessation from further invasion. Following the advice of his Drujina, Igor accepted the gold and silver thus lavishly offered to him, and a new treaty was drawn up between the Russian Prince and the Emperor in 944. On this occasion presents were exchanged, the Greeks giving gold and silver, and the Russians furs, wax and slaves.

Amongst the tribes which had reasserted themselves against the rule of the Prince of Kiev were the Drevlyans, and against them Igor now made a successful punitive expedition. Not satisfied, however, with the tribute received, he decided to demand more. Sending the majority of his followers home, and accompanied by only a few of his Drujina, he returned towards Koresten, the capital of the Drevlyans. His greed was to cost him his life, for when the Drevlyans realized what his intentions were they resolved that

it was imperative to "kill the wolf, lest the whole flock be devoured." Led by Malu, their Prince, they attacked Igor, and, having taken him captive, tied the hapless Prince to two trees, and he thus died by being torn asunder. His head was cut off, and the chief had the skull made into a drinking-cup, on which was engraved these words : "Thou camest to take what was another's, and, coming, didst lose what was thine own."

Svyatoslav was but a youth when his father lost his life and, because times were dangerous and evil, his mother, Olga, reigned in her son's stead from 945 to 955; at this time in England, Dunstan, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was rising into prominence, and the Queen-mother was reigning for her delicate son Edwy.

Although advanced in age, Olga was still fair in person, clever and crafty, and proved herself a successful ruler. Yet no easy task was hers, for Igor's feeble character and unsuccessful campaigns had weakened the dominion built up by his capable and enterprising predecessor. Olga had, however, the help of two Varangian heroes—Svenheld who led her warriors, and Asmund who acted as tutor to her boy Svyatoslav.

The Drevlyans who had killed Igor naturally feared lest his widow should seek revenge, and the Chronicles report that in order to prevent her from attacking their city they sent an embassy to Kiev inviting Olga to become the wife of Malu, their chief. It was not likely that the wily and elderly princess would be taken in by such a proposal, but she made good use of the opportunity thus offered for revenge. Graciously she thanked the envoys for the offer, saying that as she could not bring her husband back to life she might

as well marry Malu, but promised to give a definite answer on the morrow, when she would show them great honour. She stipulated that, when sent for the next day, they were to come to her "neither on foot nor on horseback, nor yet driving ; but they were to let themselves be carried in their boats." And this they did. Proudly and boastfully they refused to walk, demanding to be carried by the messengers whom Olga had sent to fetch them.

Meanwhile their hostess, intent on her revenge, had given orders for a large ditch to be dug within the courtyard of the palace ; and when the ambassadors had been carried into the castle square, instead of being put down gently on the ground, they were flung violently into the ditch. Looking down from her window, Olga called out to them, "How do you enjoy being honoured by me?" Too late did the envoys realize that they had been duped, that they had fallen a prey to Olga's revenge, and pitifully they begged for pardon ; but the vindictive princess took no heed of their piteous cries, and merely ordered her men to cover up the Drevlyans with earth, thus burying them alive.

Not yet satisfied with this savage deed, Olga sent word to Koresten—"Send more envoys, for the people of Kiev will not let me depart !" This the Drevlyans immediately did, choosing their best men, who, on arriving in Kiev, were graciously received by the princess. Suspecting no treachery, the guests followed their host to the bath-house, where they were all burned to death. Olga's revenge demanded even more victims, and therefore she sent another message

to the murderers of her husband, telling them that she was already on her way to marry their king. Before, however, she could enter their town she wished to celebrate a memorial feast at her husband's grave, and there the new envoys of the Drevlyans were to meet her. This summons was obeyed, and great preparations were made, and golden mead was brewed, which they brought to Olga, who was awaiting them at the scene of Igor's murder. Surprised at not seeing any of their own people in Olga's entourage, the Drevlyans asked where their envoys were, and were told that they were coming later. As Olga's retinue consisted of only 200 Boyars, the Drevlyans proceeded without suspicion or fear to accept her lavish hospitality. Her young men, while themselves abstaining from drink, plied their guests assiduously with mead, and when the Drevlyans were all heavily intoxicated it was an easy task for the Russians to kill every man. When these last victims did not return to the city, then, and only then, did the Drevlyans realize that all their efforts to appease Igor's widow had been in vain.

Olga now besieged their city of Koresten, but fear of falling into her ruthless hands enabled them to endure a prolonged siege. After a year had passed she sent a message that, having now fully avenged her husband's death, she was willing to conclude peace and raise the siege. She would not even ask much tribute of them—merely three sparrows and three pigeons from each homestead. Overjoyed at such easy terms, every householder sent the required birds. These Olga handed to her men, who, by her orders, tied to the tail of each bird some sulphur and string ;

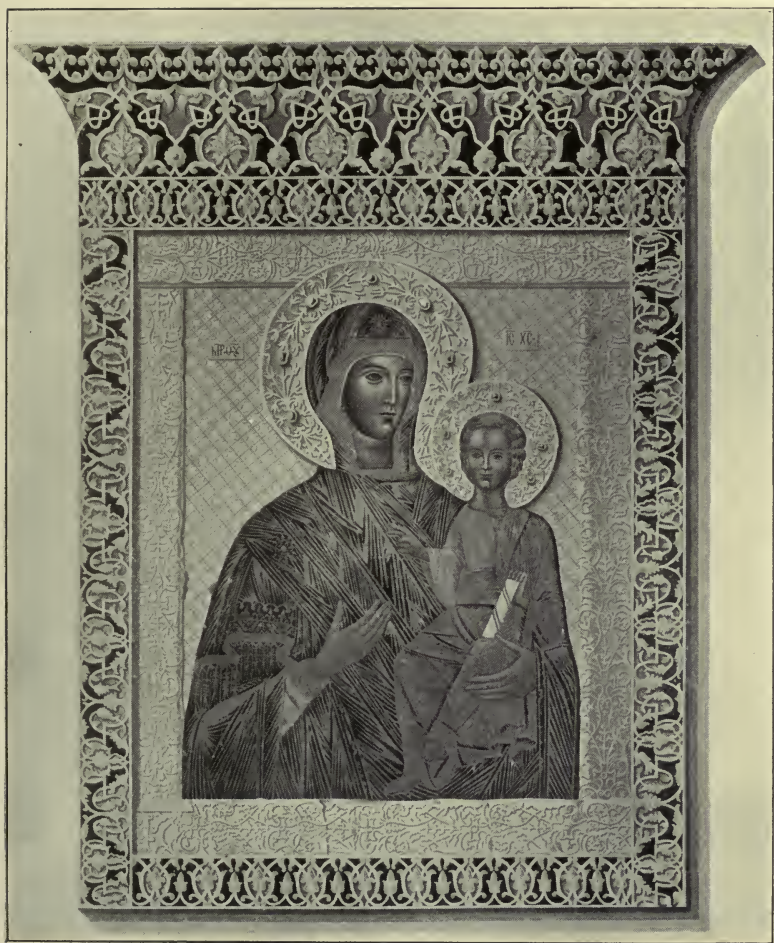
and at night, having been set fire to, the birds were let go, and, flying back to their homes, carried destruction to their owners' property. A general conflagration broke out, and as each family was occupied in trying to quench the flames of its own homestead, it was impossible to give help to neighbours. At last, panic-stricken and in despair, the Drevlyans forsook the burning city, fleeing madly into the open, when Olga's warriors fell upon them, killing many and taking others captive. From the rest she levied a heavy tribute. Then she returned to Kiev, and the fire of her vengeance seemed at last to have burned itself out with the destruction of the city of her enemies.

During the minority of her son, the Russians were ruled wisely and well by Olga, who proved herself possessed of great gifts of statesmanship. She travelled throughout the length and breadth of the realm, establishing law and order. She founded cities, regulated commerce, started fisheries, and introduced ferries across the rivers. Thus she reigned as a sovereign over the Russian lands, and when at last Svyatoslav was able to take the reins of government into his hands, her fame had spread far and wide.

Freed from the cares and responsibilities of sovereignty, Olga now turned her attention to religion. Evidently she had become interested in the Christian faith, which some Varangians and also some Russians at her court professed. She therefore decided to visit Byzantium in order to be taught Christianity, and, at the same time, to enter personally into diplomatic communications with the Emperor, as well as to develop commercial relations between the two countries.

In the year 955 the Princess Olga set out on her long and perilous journey, accompanied by her cousin, sixteen ladies, eight trusted men, twenty ambassadors, eighteen waiting-maids, one priest, two interpreters, forty-six merchants, and a large company of warriors whom Svyatoslav had given her as escort. Informed of the proposed visit of the Russian princess, the Emperor Leo, the Philosopher, had great preparations made in order to receive her in a manner worthy of Byzantine traditions, for it was the pride and glory of the Greek emperors to dazzle their visitors with a display of pomp and show. This visit, however, was different from any other, and no precedent existed for the ceremonial of the reception. It was the first time that a princess was to visit Byzantium, for although Olga had handed over the actual rule to her son, the fact of having been regent gave her the status of a sovereign in her own right. It was also the first time that a Russian potentate was coming on a peaceful mission, and not, as formerly Askold, Oleg and Igor, to attack or to levy tribute.

In September Olga arrived in the Greek capital, where rooms had been prepared for her and her suite in a palace. It seems that she had to wait some time before the first interview took place, but at last she was accorded the privilege of coming into the august presence of the Emperor. Pomp, show and luxury reigned in the palace, and on this occasion these were increased by a profusion of costly ornaments, vases, lamps, candelabra, jewelled bric-à-brac, carpets and hangings which had been brought to the palace from different churches, or had even been borrowed from



PROCESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN OF SMOLENSK.

In the Archangel Cathedral of Moscow.

private houses. All along the passages and in the rooms through which the visitors had to pass to reach the great reception hall, warriors of every people and tribe were standing on guard, each in different array : some in shining armour, with shields and swords, others in flowing mantles on which lions, griffins, stags, eagles and peacocks were embroidered. The dazzled Russian barbarians walked on floors paved with mosaic strewn with roses, and from behind the costly hangings came sweet music to enchant the ear.

Dressed in gorgeous robes sent her by the Emperor, Olga, preceded by eunuchs who were clad in costly laces and wore chains of pearls, appeared before his august presence. Her suite followed in order of rank, the merchants, who had to remain at the entrance of the throne-room, coming last of all.

Everything was calculated to impress the barbaric visitors. On a golden throne sat the Emperor, immovable, passive, silent. Each step leading up to the throne, which was standing in a bower of golden foliage, was flanked on either side by golden lions. All, with the exception of the Russian princess, prostrated themselves before the Emperor, touching the ground with their foreheads ; but when they rose up, behold ! the Emperor and his throne had been miraculously raised to the ceiling, and even while their awe-struck gaze was fixed upon it, the throne slowly descended as if by magic.

Then the Russian ambassadors addressed the Emperor in the form prescribed by etiquette : "Peace, grace, joy, and fame may God grant to the Great Emperor ! Health and long life may the Lord grant

to the peaceable and gracious Emperor! As long as thou livest may righteousness and peace reign in abundance, O peace-loving and noble Emperor!" To these words the Emperor listened with impassive mien. As it was contrary to etiquette for him personally to address any visitors, however exalted, the Logothetis, or Speaker, on his behalf put the following questions to the Russian princess: "How is thy son, the noble Grand Duke? How is the Council? How are the people, and how art thou thyself? How was the journey, and did anything unpleasant happen? Welcome! and dine to-day with His Majesty."

During this exchange of courtesies, machinery was set in motion: the lions suddenly began to beat the floor with their tails, and, opening their mouths wide, with tongues hanging out, they roared loudly, and at the same time a multitude of birds on the gilded trees began to sing the sweetest melodies. Astonishment and delight took hold of the simple Russian visitors, to whom such wonders were a revelation.

For the first time in the history of Byzantium, the Empress also had to grant an official audience, and from the throne-room of the Emperor the visitors were led to her state-room, where the same ceremonial was gone through. The Empress, sitting on her throne, impassive and silent like her lord, received the Russian ladies. An informal reception, however, followed later in the private rooms of the Empress, where they met no longer as sovereigns but as women.

On the same evening a feast was given in honour of the guests, the dinner being set out upon golden tables. While Olga's suite, on entering the banqueting hall,

bowed themselves to the ground in greeting, Olga, in virtue of her rank, merely bowed her head slightly, and was then placed at a small table not far from the Empress and her beautiful daughter-in-law, Theofani, who sat by themselves at a separate table.

While hosts and guests were feasting surrounded with luxury, the air fragrant with the perfume of flowers, lovely harmonies proceeded from a golden organ and exquisite singing filled the room. Thus all the senses were gratified. Olga and her barbarians partook of the feast, at which only women were present, for all male members of the Russian Embassy were dining with the Emperor and his children in another hall. At dessert, however, all met in friendly intercourse, and, according to custom, presents—treasures of art, and even money—were presented to the foreign guests. To Olga was handed a golden bowl, studded with jewels and filled with coins, and this present greatly pleased her. Just before leaving, basins filled with scented water were brought for washing the hands, which were dried with the finest towels. Gifts of precious ointment, of attar of roses, and other rare perfumes were also presented to the Russian ladies. A few weeks later, on the eve of her departure, a farewell reception was held in honour of the barbarian princess by his great Majesty the Emperor.

During her stay in Byzantium, Olga had been diligently instructed by the Patriarch in the Christian faith. The chronicler reports that she “absorbed his teaching like a sponge.” The Patriarch blessed her with these words: “Blessed art thou amongst Russian women because thou hast come to love the Light and

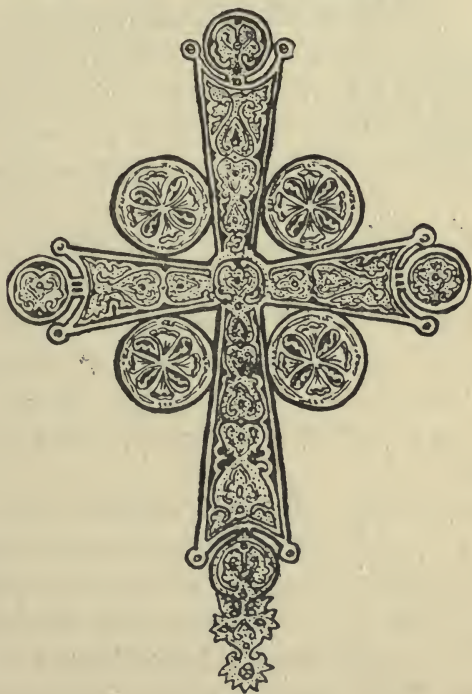
hast forsaken darkness. Thy descendants will bless thee to the end of their days." Whether Olga was baptised in Constantinople, or on her return to Kiev, history does not relate; for, although minute descriptions of the visit and of the ceremonial of her reception are recorded in the Greek documents, no mention is made of her baptism. On becoming a Christian, Olga took the name Helena, and from that time forward she used all her influence to further the spread of Christianity in Russia. In her desire to obtain teachers for her people, she sent envoys to the Court of the German Emperor, Otto II. The bishop who came in response to this appeal found, however, no welcome awaiting him from the people whom he wished to enlighten, and he was therefore soon obliged to return home.

At this period there was much intercourse with Tsargrad, as the Russians called Byzantium. As many Varangians in Russian service were Christians, and also many Russians who took service under the Greek Emperor became Christians, Christians were not now persecuted in Russia, but tolerated; they had, however, to endure much ridicule.

Olga pleaded with her son Svyatoslav to be baptised, but he refused, "for," said he, "my people would laugh at me." His mother, however, told him that he was mistaken, and that, on the contrary, all would follow his example. His refusal was a great grief to her, and "night and day she prayed for her son." Although unwilling to become a Christian himself, the Prince in no way hindered the efforts of his mother, who built several churches, chief among

them the church of St. Nicholas, over the grave of Askold.

The Russian Church canonized Olga as the first to prepare the way for the triumph of Christianity, while historians praise her because of her great gifts of statesmanship. She died in 955 at the age of seventy. A clever, wise, and far-seeing ruler, she consolidated the state, and although she left no written code, she brought uniformity into the administration of the law. The writer of the oldest Chronicles of Russia, Nestor, compares her to "the morning star before sunrise," and to "the dawn before the daylight."



ILLUMINATED CROSS.

From a tenth century Byzantine Gospel.

CHAPTER IV

HOW VLADIMIR, "FAIR SUN," BECAME ST. VLADIMIR



GROUP OF WARRIORS.
From an eleventh century fresco.

AMONG the many wives whom Svyatoslav, Prince of Kiev, had loved, was Malyusha, his mother's hand-maiden ; and her son Vladimir was treated by his princely father just the same as the other sons borne to him by his chief wives.

The little lad grew up in the apartments of his clever grandmother Olga, who may have spoken to the bright and high-spirited boy about her own faith ; but it had evidently not made any impression on him, and Vladimir grew up into a most zealous worshipper of Perun, the god of thunder.

While yet a child, his father appointed him Prince of Novgorod, for the people of that city had requested Svyatoslav to allow a prince of his house to come and live among them ; and Vladimir, under the guardianship of his mother's brother, one Dobrinya, spent his boyhood and early manhood in that ancient northern trading centre.

So long as Svyatoslav, who reigned from 958 to 973, was alive all went well ; but when he died, in the full bloom of manhood, quarrels broke out between his sons. Yarapolk, his eldest son, who had taken his brother Oleg's principality by force, was now going to make war on Vladimir in order to take possession also of Novgorod ; whereupon Vladimir fled to Scandinavia with his uncle, and for two years Yarapolk held undisputed sway over all the Russian lands. Another cause for bitter strife between the two brothers was a beautiful maiden, Rogneda, the daughter of Rogvolod, Prince of Polotsk. Both brothers desired her, but it was to Yarapolk that she betrothed herself, having refused Vladimir with these scathing words : "Never will I unloose the shoe-latchet of the son of a slave" —referring to his mother's lowly position. This insult he decided to avenge, and, having gathered together a band of warriors ready to follow him anywhere, he returned to Russia. He conquered Polotsk, killed Rogneda's father and brothers, and took the proud damsel to wife. Not satisfied with having robbed his brother of his bride, Vladimir now aimed at depriving him of his principality, for he who ruled over Kiev was considered chief among the princes.

Through the forests he and his Drujina rode on towards that famous city. As they approached it, Vladimir sent messengers before him to warn his brother of his coming, for it was against the code of honour of a Russian prince to take his enemy unawares. Yarapolk was, however, betrayed by one of his followers and killed. Kiev was then seized by Vladimir, who also took to himself his brother's young widow, a

fair and lovely Greek lady, formerly a nun, whom his father had brought back as a captive of war.

He now reigned in Kiev, and soon the fame of his prowess, of his victorious campaigns, of his feasts and revellings, and of his merry, cheerful nature spread all over the country. Warriors and knights came from all parts to join his company of heroes—his *Drujina*. It was a time when the restless Norsemen were threading the seas in all directions, coming as invaders to Britain to be bought off with the Danegeld, and as welcome guests to Kiev. All the knights who joined Vladimir, or “Fair Sun,” as they called him, were glad to follow so great a leader and so generous, genial and clever a ruler. The Russians loved fair women as well as brave men, and this led to his becoming a much-married man ; for, according to the chronicler, he had as chief wives Rogneda, the proud beauty of Polotsk, his brother’s Grecian widow, and also a Bohemian and a Bulgarian, and, besides them, eight hundred secondary wives, who were established in three different parts of the country.

The first five years of his reign in Kiev were passed in campaigns, for “Fair Sun” undertook many warlike expeditions, conquering tribes and levying tribute. On the west his dominions extended right up to the gates of Cracow and Przemyśl ; he also took all Galicia and Volhynia, where he founded the town of Vladimir, and in the south his rule extended as far as the Carpathians.

Under Vladimir the worship of the gods Perun, Daghbog, and Voloss was zealously practised. In various places the Grand Duke had images of these gods put up ; in one place a gigantic figure of Perun,

with a silver head and a heavy gold moustache. This revival of paganism made life more difficult for the small band of Christians who, during Svyatoslav's reign, had been left in peace, for now they were not only scoffed at but occasionally even persecuted. Although human sacrifices were not customary among the Slavs, Vladimir on one occasion desired to celebrate a victory by the sacrifice of a youth or maiden, the victim to be chosen by the casting of lots. The choice fell on a Christian boy, "beautiful in soul and body," but his father, a Christian Varangian, refused to hand him over, saying, "You say, 'Our gods want thy son'; well, these are not gods, but just pieces of wood which in a short time rot away. Your idols neither eat nor drink, nor do they speak. There is only one God, He whom the Greeks worship and serve, and Who has made heaven and earth, the stars, the sun and the moon, and all that has life. But your gods, what have they done? They themselves have been made by you, and therefore I will not give my son to be sacrificed unto demons."

This speech, and the father's refusal to give up the boy, greatly enraged the people, who fell upon the Christian and his son, killing both. Some years later this same father and son were canonized by the Church as the first Russian martyrs, and July 8 is the day dedicated to these two saints, St. Theodor and St. Ivan.

A time came, however, when even Vladimir turned from his idols. In order not to be behind the times, and also to enhance his prestige and power, he decided to exchange his heathen faith for the religion of the

States with which he had come into political contact—the Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland. It was difficult for him to decide upon a matter about which he knew so little, in spite of the fact that his grandmother had been a devout Christian, and that many of the merchants who traded with Kiev came from Christian countries. It is, however, possible that the chronicler is right in crediting Vladimir with partly spiritual motives. He tells us that—"The Spirit of the Highest came upon him and enlightened his mind and heart so that he perceived the vanity and error of paganism, and therefore he turned to the one God who created all creatures visible and invisible." Whether this was so, or whether it was merely political wisdom that influenced Vladimir, who can tell? He was, however, evidently sincerely desirous of choosing the best religion, and therefore listened readily to the various missionaries who, according to the chronicler, came to him for the purpose of urging him to accept their creed. But perhaps these men had an eye to business as well, and were anxious to promote the interests of trade by winning over the famous prince to their own religion.

The first men to speak to him on the subject were some Moslem Bulgars; they told him that, although he was a great and wise ruler, he was nevertheless ignorant of the law and faith of the great Prophet. In reply to Vladimir's question, in what their law consisted, the Moslems told him that it consisted in the rite of circumcision, in abstention from all strong drink and from the flesh of swine; but, in compensation for this self-denial, great pleasures awaited the faithful in

paradise, where at least seventy of the most beautiful women should be given to him by the prophet. The prohibition of the drinking of wine, that "joy of the Russians," was sufficient to prejudice the prince against Islam.

When, therefore, some Germans in their turn brought messages from the Pope and offered to instruct him in their faith, he willingly listened to them. "We have the true light," they said; "and while we worship the Creator of all things, thou, O Prince, art bowing down to idols made of wood." So far, so good! The hitch came when he asked for the rules of their religion. "Fasting to the uttermost of one's strength, and all eating and drinking to be done only to the glory of God." This did not appeal to the pleasure-loving Russian any more than did the Moslem creed; and he therefore bade the representatives of the Western Church depart.

News that Vladimir was looking out for a new religion had also reached the Jews who dwelt among the Khazars, and they now felt it their duty to go and urge upon him the acceptance of their creed. "We hear that the Bulgars and Germans have come to lay before thee their several religions," they said. "We worship God, but the Christians worship One whom we have crucified." Just as Vladimir had enquired of the others, so now he questioned the Jews regarding their law, and also asked them which country was theirs. To the first question they replied that their law enforced circumcision and abstention from the flesh of swine and hares. To the second question their answer was "Jerusalem." But when he heard

from them that God had been angry with their forefathers, and because of their sins had scattered their people and had given their land to the Christians, Vladimir was wrath with them, and said, "How dare you even attempt to teach others while you yourselves are under the anger of your God. If He had really loved you and your law He would not have scattered you ; but now you want the same ill-fate to befall us !"

The next to come were Greeks from Byzantium, who put before Vladimir the beauty of their faith. They spoke of "Christ the Incarnate Word, of His death and passion," and as Vladimir listened he was overcome with awe and surprise, and asked, "Why did God come down upon earth, and why did He take such suffering upon Himself?" Perceiving that they had touched his heart, the Greek Christians "now told him all from the very beginning, until the Seventh Council." They also showed him a painting in which the Last Judgment was vividly depicted. There, at the right hand were the righteous going up into paradise with joy and gladness, while there, at the left, were the wicked going down into perdition. When the meaning of the picture had been explained to Vladimir, he sighed deeply and said, "How happy is the lot of those at the right hand, but woe unto those on the left!" Seeing what a deep impression they had made on the prince, the missionaries told him that this blessedness could be his on condition that he would allow himself to be baptised.

Although Vladimir took all this to heart, he was not going to be hurried into making a definite decision on so important a question, but promised to enquire still

further into the mysteries of their faith. He was so much in earnest that he selected ten of his most trusted friends and sent them on a journey to Bulgaria, Rome and Byzantium, where they were to see for themselves how the various peoples worshipped God.

When news reached the two Emperors, Constantine and Basil, at Byzantium that a Russian embassy had come to study the Christian religion on behalf of the famous Prince of Kiev, they gave orders to the Patriarch to hold a specially solemn service for the benefit of the pagan envoys, who were deeply impressed by the clouds of incense and by the wonderful singing of the choir. Delighted and enchanted by this pomp and beauty, they listened gladly to an explanation of the deep symbolic meaning of the service. The Emperors sent for the envoys, did them much honour, gave them presents and told them to return to their country and report to their prince all they had seen.

This they did, and to the Grand Duke and his councillors, who were sitting round him listening with eager interest, these envoys now described the squalid mosques of Bulgaria, and the lack of beauty in the churches at Rome ; when, however, they came to their visit to Tsargrad, joy welled up in their hearts at the memory of all the glory and beauty they had been privileged to behold at Byzantium. "We were taken to the place where the Greeks worship their God," they said, "and we almost thought we were already in heaven, for nowhere on earth had we beheld such beauty, nor can we describe it. But this we learnt : that God dwells everywhere with man, and that he is

worshipped in many lands. Never shall we forget the beauty we have seen, and, just as no one willingly tastes the bitter after having tasted the sweet, so we also can no longer remain here, but must return to the place where God is worshipped in such beauty."

This report greatly affected the boyars, who urged Vladimir to accept the faith of the Greeks ; and, to strengthen their plea, they reminded him of the fact that his grandmother Olga, who had been the wisest of women, had made this form of faith her own. So in the end Vladimir decided to become a Christian, and the only question remaining to be settled was where he should be baptised.

Just about this time the two Emperors of Byzantium were being pressed on many sides by their enemies the Poles and the Germans, and in their need they called upon the mighty Ruler of Kiev for aid. As a reward they offered him the hand of their sister Anna, on condition, however, that he should first be baptised. Vladimir was glad to assist them ; but time went on, and the promised princess was not sent to him, for now that the danger of an attack was passed, it seemed unthinkable to give the "purple-born" daughter of the "purple-born" Emperor in wedlock to the Russian barbarian. This enraged Vladimir, and he therefore laid siege to the city of Korsun in the Crimea, where Sevastopol now stands. He had, however, yet another reason for besieging the town ; for, having decided to become a Christian, he needed priests to baptise him and his people. But his pride rebelled against having to ask for them, so he meant to get them by force of arms.

There were also important political reasons underlying his action, for Vladimir knew that the Greek Emperors were only too ready to claim all orthodox Christians as their subjects ; and in order to avoid the danger of his being considered a vassal, he took this high-handed proceeding, intending to come before them as a conqueror instead of a suppliant.

After a siege of six months' duration, the town was forced to surrender, having been betrayed by a Greek, who gave certain information to the Grand Duke of Kiev, which enabled him to cut off the water-supply. Vladimir's threat to attack Byzantium unless the promised bride was brought to him influenced the terrified Byzantine rulers, and Anna's objections to the marriage were overridden. She was consoled for the sacrifice by the assurance that in marrying the Russian barbarian she would have a unique opportunity of influencing a heathen people to adopt Christianity.

Before, however, the marriage ceremony could be performed, or even before he could become a Christian, Vladimir was obliged to get rid of his many wives ; among the principal of these four had been Christians when he married them. Predslava, a Varangian, he sent to Novgorod ; Rogneda, the beautiful maiden of Polotsk, whom he had re-named Glorislava, retired into a nunnery ; Malfreda, the Bohemian, did not long survive the separation ; but there were still Adel (a Czech) and Milolika (a Bulgarian—his favourite) to dispose of, and these and his other eight hundred wives he gave in marriage to his vassals and boyars.

Finally all was arranged, and the Greek princess

was married in Korsun to Vladimir, who, meanwhile, had been baptised. He did not retain the conquered town, but handed it over to his wife as a dowry, and in doing so restored it to Byzantium. After the wedding Vladimir left Korsun, carrying back with him to his capital not only priests to baptise and instruct his people, but also holy pictures and vestments to help in furnishing the churches which he meant to build. For this latter purpose he also brought back with him Greek architects and builders.

The first thing Vladimir set himself to do on arriving in Kiev was to have his subjects baptised. As there was no priestly caste among the heathen Russians, and as their faith contained no dogma, but consisted chiefly of superstitions, there were no particular objections to be overcome. The people in and around Kiev were the first to undergo the new rite. On a given day, in the year 988, when all had been summoned for the general baptism, the great statue of Perun was pulled down, tied to the tail of a horse, dragged down the hill, beaten with sticks, and finally flung into the river. The vast crowd witnessed the degradation of their god, and saw for themselves that he was incapable of defending himself, not even seeming to resent the ill-treatment meted out to him.

Trusting in the superior wisdom of their rulers, of the princes and the boyars, the people "joyfully entered the river and received baptism, sure that what the great people had accepted must be good." True, the chronicler tells us that "Vladimir advised his people to be baptised, and those who did not do so from inclination did so from fear, as the Grand Duke's zeal



“BOGATYRI,” THREE BOLD KNIGHTS.

From the painting by V. M. Vaznetsov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

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for the faith was linked with violence, and no one dared disobey his pious command."

In Novgorod, however, where Vladimir sent his uncle Dobrynya, together with a bishop and some priests, the change of religion was not so peacefully brought about. The people bitterly resented the attacks on their idols by the emissaries of the Grand Duke, who preached to them in the streets and market-place ; and when called together by their chiefs, the crowds of heathen angrily refused to listen to this new doctrine, convinced that it was better for them to die than to let their gods be insulted. Influenced by the wonderful eloquence of their chief, the people broke out in riot, attacked Dobrynya's house and killed his wife ; they also destroyed a church which had been built some time before by Christian Varangians. But by means of a ruse, Poutyata, one of Vladimir's men, managed to get the upper hand ; he sent for men from another town, and with this aid attacked Novgorod, and a regular battle ensued. It was only after many houses had been destroyed and many people killed that the citizens sued for peace, which was promised on condition that they would be baptised.

To this they consented, and Dobrynya promptly proceeded to destroy all the idols : those of stone were broken up and thrown into the river, and those of wood were burned. This caused great sorrow and anguish of heart to the heathen, who wept bitterly, and pleaded with Dobrynya to spare their gods. But he only laughed and said, "Ye unreasonable people, why do you worry about those who cannot help themselves ?" Perun was especially badly treated, and as

he was being beaten and dragged to the river, a demon entered into him, who cried out, "Woe is me ; I am catching it soundly from unmerciful hands !" The bishop strictly forbade anyone to give him help or shelter, and therefore when, the next day, Perun swam ashore and tried to climb up the banks, one of the newly-baptised Christians pushed him back into the river, saying, "Perun, thou hast eaten and drunk thy fill ; now just swim away !"

On a given day all the people had to present themselves for baptism, and those who did not come voluntarily were dragged along by armed force. Thus everybody was baptised in the river, the men above, the women below, the bridge. Many, however, in order to escape baptism, pretended that they were already Christians. When this was found out, all who had been christened were commanded to have a cross hung around their necks, and whoever was detected without one was thereupon forcibly baptised. Thus quiet was restored in Novgorod, and Poutyata returned to Kiev ; but the people scoffed at the way in which Christianity had been introduced, saying : "Poutyata baptised with the sword, and Dobrinya with fire !"

Gradually the new faith spread throughout the Russian lands, and all Vladimir's Slav subjects were baptised. For political reasons, however, he left the other tribes—especially those of the north-east of Russia, who clung to their old faith—undisturbed ; since his rule over them was not yet established, the prudent prince did not wish to irritate them.

Thus the Russians became Christians outwardly, but

remained heathens in their hearts, retaining all their old customs. There were not sufficient priests to teach them, and the people merely added Christianity to their old beliefs. Just as they had been baptised themselves, so in all good faith they also christened their gods. Perun, the Thunder God, they christened Elijah, and to this day the prophet celebrates his day with thunder. For quite two centuries the Russian people held this dual faith, much to the grief of their spiritual leaders. Vladimir realized the necessity of instructing the people in the new religion, but the great difficulty was to procure priests who could speak to them in their own tongue. Finally he sent to Bulgaria, where a language very similar to the Russian was spoken, whence priests came who brought with them the written Word—for Cyril and Methodius, the great missionaries to the southern Slavs, had invented an alphabet and had translated the Holy Scriptures into Slavonic.

Vladimir built many churches in Kiev, some of wood and some of stone, besides a fine cathedral which he dedicated to "the Mother of God." For the upkeep of this cathedral, and for the support of the Metropolitan and his clergy, the Grand Duke set apart a tenth of all his princely revenues, whether in fur or honey, in corn or merchandise. Thus, the church of the "tenth," as it was called, stands to this day a witness to Vladimir's zeal and earnestness.

He also commanded the boyars and the leading citizens to send their children to the newly-founded schools, where they were taught by the priests. The mothers wept over this order as though it were death,

and not instruction, that awaited their little ones. By this far-seeing policy Vladimir prepared a future generation of Christians, not only in name, but in reality ; and this first set of scholars provided Russia with native-born Christian leaders and priests.

According to the Chronicle, "Vladimir prepared the soil, broke up the ground and made it soft and loose ; that is to say, he enlightened the people by introducing Christianity. To his son Yaroslav, however, it was given to sow the seed in the soil which was already prepared : he furthered instruction by means of books. Vladimir baptised, Yaroslav taught and established the people in the faith."

In his desire to spread Christianity the Grand Duke travelled all over the country, urging the people to become Christians. "Thus," again to quote the chronicler, "our land began to praise the Christ, the Father, and the Holy Ghost," and paganism became a forbidden creed. Most of those who adhered to it did so in secret. But there were others who rebelled against this change of faith, and openly clung to their old gods ; they fled into the forests, where they lived as outlaws, and thus the number of robbers enormously increased. Vladimir at first did not proceed against them with sufficient energy, for the erstwhile warlike prince had, since his baptism, become averse to fighting and was growing almost too lenient. But a strong hand was needed to keep down this lawlessness, and at last the Bishop of Kiev asked Vladimir why it was that he did not have these robbers put to death. "Because I do not wish to commit sin," was the Grand Duke's reply. Then he was told by the bishop that God had

entrusted him with power and had made him a judge over evildoers and a rewarder of virtue, "and that it was his duty to punish the robbers, but that a thorough enquiry should be made first." Thereupon Vladimir no longer merely imposed fines, but had the robbers put to death instead, until his counsellors, perceiving how much money was thereby lost, induced him to re-establish fines. "For," they said, "we have frequent wars, and this money comes in usefully for the purchase of weapons and horses."

The increased intercourse with Byzantium, now no longer merely commercial, deeply influenced Russian life and customs. The introduction of Christianity brought culture in its wake ; moreover, Vladimir loved beauty and art, and appreciated learning. A wise man, he knew how to retain the old and yet adapt it to the new conditions ; his generous and humane character, his desire to see all around him happy and content, the cheerfulness of his disposition and his love of merriment and social pleasure made him merciful and charitable. Formerly he and his Drujina and the boyars had revelled and feasted to their hearts' content, had eaten and drunk and been merry. Now the poor and needy, the orphan and the widow were remembered when the feast was spread ; and to those who were too sick to come to the palace he sent food. On all the great saints' day and holy days everybody was free to join the feasting in his palace yard, where prince and people, leaders and led, met in friendly intercourse. This also served the political purpose of drawing the classes together.

Valorous knights from all parts were drawn to Kiev

by the fame of Vladimir, for the renown of this merry, genial, and generous prince had spread far and wide. Thus it came about that while he remained at home organizing his lands, building up his dominion and fostering the peaceful arts, his Bogatyrs or knights went out to fight against enemies and oppressors, and returned to him to tell of great deeds done and of victories won.

Vladimir's most bitter and dangerous foes were the Petchenegs, from whose raids his people suffered terribly. Tales of their fierceness and cruelty had spread even as far as Germany, and the missionary Brun writes in the year 1007 that he "went to the fiercest of all the heathen—the Petchenegs," and that "the Grand Duke of Kiev, who reigned over vast lands, pleaded with him not to go amongst those people, as he was sure that he, Brun, would be killed by them." He gratefully records that on his refusal to give up his intention, Vladimir himself accompanied him to the very borders of the Petchenegs' country, where they parted, the prince full of foreboding for the gentle Christian. Five months later, however, after a successful mission, Brun returned to Kiev, having not only baptised thirty heathen, but having also prevailed upon the Chief of the Petchenegs to make peace with Vladimir. This prince now sent one of his sons, accompanied by a bishop, as envoy to his former enemies, and for a while Russia was at rest.

Towards the end of his reign Vladimir suffered much grief and sorrow on account of his sons, some of whom rebelled against him. For Vladimir had given to his twelve sons and several nephews land for their posses-

sion, laying thereby the foundation for much trouble in the future, and the realm he had so zealously striven to consolidate was to be rent asunder under the rule of his descendants. Yaroslav, to whom he had given Novgorod, caused him much trouble by his refusal to hand over the right proportion of the taxes gathered by him on behalf of his father. Vladimir then decided to go against his son and meet him in battle; but death overtook him, and "the devil was robbed of the pleasure of seeing father and son at war with each other."

When the people heard of Vladimir's death they gathered in crowds and made great lamentation. "The boyars bemoaned the loss of their leader, the people of their protector, and the poor of their sustainer." Vladimir was a new type of ruler in Russia—not merely a knight amongst knights, or a greater chief amongst lesser chiefs—but an acknowledged king, the founder of a dynasty. He was also a true statesman, to whose wisdom and foresight ancient Russia owed her first consolidation as a state. It was he who introduced gold and silver coinage; on one side of the coin was the figure of Our Lord, and on the other Vladimir in imperial robes, holding a cross in his hand. A Russian Metropolitan, one of the firstfruits of the schools founded by Vladimir, wrote in praise of him in 1050: "Rome sings the praise of Peter and Paul, all countries and cities and men honour and glorify their teacher who has taught them the faith. . . . Let us also, as much as in us lies, praise with humble thanksgiving our teacher and instructor, who has done great and wondrous teachings, the great

Khan of our land, Vladimir, the grandson of Igor, the son of the glorious Svyatoslav. . . .” Yet it was not until 1257, nearly two and a half centuries after his death, that this champion of the Christian faith was canonized ; for the very feasts, with their sumptuousness and good cheer, which had made him so popular with his people, were made a reproach to him by the ascetic clergy of a later date, and it was only after these festivities had been forgotten that his zeal for the faith was recognized by the Church, and he was made into St. Vladimir.

In the memory of a loving people, however, he lives as the joyous, chivalrous, glorious “Fair Sun.” Around his attractive personality and exploits, as well as those of the mighty men who surrounded him, whole cycles of romantic tales have been woven, and it is in these “Byilinas” that the life and soul of those heroic days have been preserved for all time. The most famous of Vladimir’s bold knights were Ilya Mourometz, Dobrynia Nikititch, and Alësha Popovitch, whose names have become household words. Thus, in the story of the life of Vladimir, romance, tradition and history meet, and at one and the same time he is glorified as the valorous pagan knight, venerated as the christianizer of Russia, and appraised as the founder of the Russian Empire.



THE COIN OF VLADIMIR.

Discovered in 1812.

CHAPTER V

PREDSLAVA AND GRADISLAVA, DAUGHTERS OF THE PRINCE OF POLOTSK



RUSSIAN PRINCESS.
From an eleventh century fresco, Kiev.

BY the twelfth century Russia had fallen on evil days; the Russian land had gradually been divided up into numerous principalities, the rulers of which were perpetually at war with one another: just as it was at that time also in England, where unbridled feudalism

was rampant, when the Barons were fighting for their own interests, and the weak Stephen proved unable to prevent anarchy.

There was no unity, no solidarity amongst the princes of Russia, and the people were the chief sufferers from this state of affairs, for there was a chronic dearth of agricultural labourers, and each side strove to make good its deficiency by bringing back captives of war. As a natural result, ruin and misery prevailed, and sorrow reigned over the land; families were separated, children became orphans, and wives

were made widows, while fertile fields and pastures were laid waste. The great nobles, callous and indifferent to the suffering around them, cared only for their own enrichment and glory, leaving the poor to groan in utter helplessness.

In this they were not worse than their peers in Western Europe; the Saxon chronicler writes that it is not easy to recount all the misery the poor people suffered from baronial tyranny.

All, however, were not callous—at any rate, not Predslava, the lovely daughter of the Prince of Polotsk. From her earliest childhood this princess had witnessed grief and sorrow, had seen the wounded brought back on stretchers, had heard the weeping of the bereaved women, and had listened to the tales told by her father and brothers on their return from a raid—tales of enemies slain and booty captured.

As the young girl listened, she wondered if it were really impossible for people to live in peace and unity. Was there not enough land for everyone? Her heart grew heavy at the thought of all the misery involved, and when she grew older she could no longer bear to hear the songs and rejoicings of her father's followers; neither could she take pleasure in the costly presents brought to her from these raids.

Like a lily amongst thorns and thistles was Predslava; sweet and pure was her life, but her spirit was weighed down by all the sorrow and wrong-doing she had to witness. Her one desire was to bring joy to others, to see everybody happy and good. Life to her young mind meant happiness, not misery; and the problem ever nearest to her heart was how she could bring

peace to those around her who were in such dire need of it. Her greatest treasure was a copy of the New Testament which had been written out by some pious monks ; it was from this sacred book that the young princess had learned to read. The wonderful story of the life of the Saviour, who went about doing good, made a deep impression on the receptive mind and tender heart of the fair maiden. The more distressed and perplexed she became by the misery around her, the more she turned to her only source of comfort—the Holy Book, whole pages of which she committed to memory. She wondered how it was that more people did not know of this solace, and on realizing that it was owing to the expense of having it copied that so few could possess the Holy Book, she decided to spend her time in making copies of it herself, to distribute amongst those who could not otherwise obtain it. Surely people must grow better through reading the Gospel, she reasoned, being convinced that it was only because they were ignorant and unenlightened that her own dear people were so cruel and heartless.

The young princess, like a ministering angel, spent her days in works of love and pity. She ordered food to be given to the captives brought to the castle by her father, and spoke to them words of encouragement and good cheer. With her own hands she washed the sores of the wounded, and did everything so gently and tenderly that all the poor and suffering looked upon her as an angel from heaven.

Predslava's knowledge of how to care for the sick was gained not only by experience, but also by studying all that was known about the healing herbs and

roots from which she concocted her medicines. Her fame as a physician was noised abroad, and from towns and villages the sick and wounded began flocking to the castle at Polotsk, where they found Predslava always ready to help and succour all who came to her. She not only healed the sick, but fed the hungry and gave money to the poor.

The Prince, her father, did not interfere with her activity; he looked on and marvelled, pleased enough to hear his daughter spoken of on every hand as an angel of God. He was proud that she should be so beloved by the people, to whom she seemed as necessary as the very sun itself, and allowed her to take from the granaries as much corn as she required. He also lent a ready ear to her pleading, and, at her request, many a captive was set free.

Beautiful in person and lovely in mind, this daughter of a rich and powerful prince had many a princely suitor. But the question of marriage was a trouble to Predslava. How could she think of building her own nest when so many around her were in want and misery? If she married she would have her own family and dependants to care for, and what would then become of the sick and miserable? Might it not mean that "God's family" would be neglected for the sake of her own?

Predslava, therefore, postponed all idea of marriage as long as she could; but at last her father, without consulting her, and in accordance with the custom of those days, betrothed her to a neighbouring prince. Great preparations were made for the marriage, and the sound of feasting and rejoicing was heard in the

castle. But the bride-elect, sad and perplexed, retired to the solitude of her chamber, where, on the eve of her wedding-day, she prayed to her Saviour for definite guidance. Not that she was afraid of the marriage, for her betrothed was young, kind-hearted and handsome, but that she dreaded having to surrender herself to the cares of the world. Hour after hour was thus spent in prayer, until at last the day began to break, and as her eyes beheld the first rays of the sun, Predslava cried out, "O Lord, Thou who dost direct the course of the sun, direct also the steps of Thy weak and helpless servant. Show me the path wherein I can best serve Thee and show forth Thy love!"

As if in answer to her cry, the bell of the neighbouring convent rang out and broke the stillness of the morning air, and when Predslava heard the sweet sound of this call to prayer, all her doubts vanished. "The Lord is calling me!" she said, and rising from her knees, she flung a mantle around her and secretly left the castle. Swiftly covering the short distance which lay between it and the nunnery, she went straight to the Mother Superior, who was also her aunt, and, throwing herself at the feet of the Abbess, Predslava pleaded to be at once admitted as a nun.

Her aunt, however, alarmed at this unexpected request, exclaimed, "What has befallen thee, my child? Happiness, pleasure and riches are awaiting thee; thy father is preparing a feast for thee, and thou askest for the black veil!"

"It is the riches and glory which are weighing me down," whispered the maiden; "for have they not been purchased at the cost of blood? Think of

the times in which we live ! How could I be happy with a husband ? He would always be making campaigns or raids, and I should be in constant fear of his being wounded or killed ; and if he returned, I should dread lest he had spilt his brother's blood."

As she listened to Predslava's words, the burden of her past life and the sorrow of her widowhood rose up before the aged princess, who felt the truth of what her niece was saying. Fearing, however, the anger of the girl's father, she sent for the Bishop, who also urged Predslava to reconsider her decision. "Thou art young and fair, my daughter, and dost not realize how heavy is the burden thou desirest to take upon thy shoulders. Thy parents will cast thee off, and thou wilt be left alone in the world."

Looking straight into the eyes of the Bishop, the brave maiden reproved him thus : "Do not try to alarm a youthful soul which is bent on following God. The yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light, and I shall never be alone, for God will be my Father, and the unhappy, the orphaned, and the sick shall be my people !"

No longer could the Abbess and the Bishop withstand Predslava's appeal, and the monastic rite was performed ; she was shorn of her beautiful tresses, and a new name, that of Euphrosina, given to her.

The sun had risen in all its glory on the wedding morning, but where was the fair Princess Predslava ? Nowhere could she be found. The greatest excitement prevailed, and the Prince sent his followers out in every direction to search for her, while he himself rode forth to seek his child. In front of the

convent gates he was met by the Bishop, cross in hand. "Do not seek Predslava," he said ; "she is no more. It is the nun Euphrosina who dwells behind these walls."

Furious with rage, the Prince threatened to destroy the nunnery and raze it to the ground, but the Bishop warned him that it was useless fighting against God, and that he could never get his daughter back by means of violence. "Thou hast sinned much and often by thy campaigns, Prince ; Euphrosina will intercede for thee."

The old warrior was moved to tears by these words, and turning his charger homewards, he rode to his castle, where he shut himself up in his room. At first he was inconsolable, but gradually became calmer and submitted to the will of God.

The young nun Euphrosina soon became accustomed to her new life. The convent was famous, and many pilgrims came to visit it. All were welcome to stay for two or three days as guests of the nuns, who attended to their needs and saw to their comfort. The time of the nuns was also taken up in attending the services, in reading, and in doing needlework. But these occupations did not satisfy the young princess, who asked the Bishop to give her his blessing and set her apart for active work. "Let me follow the example of the Holy Anna who served in the Temple. Here, in the convent, there are many sisters ; no one will miss me ; permit me to serve in the cathedral, and let me live in one of the cells in the wall of that sacred building."

The Bishop granted her request, giving her his

blessing and the required permission, and she went to serve in the cathedral, spending her leisure hours in transcribing the Gospel in clear and beautiful handwriting. Some of the copies were sent away as gifts to poor churches ; others she sold to rich people, who paid handsomely for them. All the money thus earned Euphrosina distributed amongst the poor, whom she had come to know well, for she visited them in their homes. She nursed the sick, fed the hungry, washed and clothed neglected children, and comforted the sorrow-stricken by reading the Gospel to them. The people flocked to her cell ; mothers brought their children to her in order that she might teach them, the sick came for medicine, and widows and orphans came to hear her tender, loving words of comfort.

The Bishop noted all this with joy and satisfaction ; indeed, he so appreciated her wonderful character and remarkable powers of organization that he offered the young princess a village which belonged to the cathedral, having no doubt that under her capable management the tithes would surely be forthcoming. Euphrosina rejoiced greatly over this generous gift, and, gathering together her large family of orphans, destitute souls and cripples, started off for her new abode. The whole town turned out to speed her on her journey, and to watch the departure of the file of carts which carried away her "family" of the sick, the wretched, the needy, and the homeless.

There in her village Euphrosina found work for everyone. The blind made nets and shoes of plaited straw, the deaf split wood, the lame carved wooden vessels, the older men kept bees or went fishing to

provide the large family with food, and those who were stronger than the rest sawed wood and built huts. Her fame spread far and wide, and from all parts the poor found their way to Euphrosina, as did also the rich, who brought with them gifts for the "Nourisher of the Poor." Many wealthy widows and spinsters took up their abode with her as fellow-workers.

Thus an entirely new monastic establishment gradually developed. In this settlement there was life and activity ; work and prayer went hand in hand, and God was praised both by word and deed.

When the old Prince of Polotsk and his wife saw how God was blessing their daughter's life and labour, they ceased to bemoan her loss and began to take a real pride in her work.

In the meantime, at the castle, Euphrosina's little sister, Gradislava, was growing up and developing into a lovely girl. Euphrosina, in order to save her sister from the sights and sounds which had grieved her so much in her own childhood, now suggested to her parents that the little maiden should be sent to her. "We will teach her to read, to pray, and to work, and I promise you that she will blossom like a rose in these healthy, happy surroundings." So Gradislava came and was brought up in the nunnery, far away from the tales of bloody warfare and the noisy revels of her father's home. Under the tender care of her elder sister, the maiden grew in sweetness and purity, hearing all that was good and holy and witnessing works of love and mercy.

After a while the time came for Gradislava to be

betrothed, but instead of joyfully responding to her parents' call to the wedding feast and marriage bells, she pleaded to be left where she was. Bitterly, in his grief and disappointment, did the old Prince reproach his elder daughter for bereaving him of his second child : "Thou didst offer merely to educate thy sister, not to withhold her from us."

Distressed by the sorrow of her parents, Euphrosina sent them a loving message inviting them to come and judge for themselves as to whether Gradislava was likely to be happier and of greater use in the castle or in the settlement. The old Prince and his wife decided to accept the invitation to visit their daughters, sure in their own minds that they would easily convince the younger one of the pleasures which awaited her in the home of a husband.

On the day of their arrival—a saint's day—multitudes of people were thronging the square in front of the church. Suddenly there was a stir and movement amongst them as of anticipation, and joyful exclamations burst from many lips. In response to his enquiry as to whether a procession was expected, the Prince was told that it was the Princess Gradislava who was coming to distribute gifts to the poor. And, sure enough, there, at the other end of the square, lay heaped up bags of corn, vegetables and bales of linen ; there stood horses, cows and sheep, as well as carts and agricultural implements.

The crowd made way for the fair Gradislava and her attendants, who walked behind her carrying medicines and ointments for the sick. On reaching the place where all the gifts were deposited, she began to

distribute them according to each one's need. There were many to attend to, as there was much distress in the land, which had just passed through an evil year ; but Gradislava listened to all the pleading, carefully dealing with each case, considering it, discussing it and then acting accordingly. Thus she gave to one seed-corn, to another a horse, to a third a cart—to each what he required ; to some she gave more than they asked, while others had to go away empty-handed.

The old Prince and his wife grew tired of waiting, for Gradislava was occupied with the people until late in the afternoon, and made their way to their night's resting-place, intending to take their child away with them on the morrow. But again they were disappointed, for they found next morning that their daughter had set off, at break of day, on her daily round of visits to the sick. As soon as her parents heard of this, they started to follow her, but at the first hut they entered there was no Gradislava, for she had already been and gone. "She flies in at sunrise like a bird," they were told, "and if she did not start early she would never go the round ; with her own hands she washes her patients, combs out their hair, and administers their medicine. She is a comfort, a cheer and a blessing to all," said the people. "She is the joy of our lives ; no mere girl is she, but an angel sent from God."

And thus it was everywhere. Wherever the parents went they heard the same tale : "Our joy is Gradislava ; to us she is like a sunbeam. She is our guardian angel."

At last her parents found her kneeling on the floor of a hut by the side of an old man. His eyes were closed, and with every breath he drew there was a rattling sound in his throat. As he clung with his cold, withered fingers to the soft, warm hand of the maiden, he slowly and painfully gasped out, "Art thou there, Princess? Do not leave me . . . I am afraid . . . I am so great a sinner . . . I have slain . . . blood, blood, I see blood everywhere . . . pray for me . . . God will hear thy prayers . . . thou hast a pure and holy soul. . . ."

Tenderly Gradislava bent over him and told him the story of the Prodigal Son, of the woman who was a sinner, of Zaccheus, and of the penitent thief on the Cross. And as the dying man listened to these sweet words of comfort, his breathing grew easier; but when Gradislava started to raise herself up from the ground, he implored her not to leave him. "Pray for me, thy prayer will save me," he whispered; "bless me, ere I breathe my last."

It was then that Gradislava for the first time addressed her parents, who had witnessed the scene with wonder and awe: "Father and mother dear, do not ask me to go home with you to-day. I cannot leave this man. Wait until to-morrow, for he surely cannot last until dawn. Let me but close his eyes; his life has been hard and weary, let him now die in peace."

Softly the princely pair withdrew, for how could they resist such an appeal? But when next morning they looked for Gradislava in her cell they did not find her there, but discovered her later surrounded by

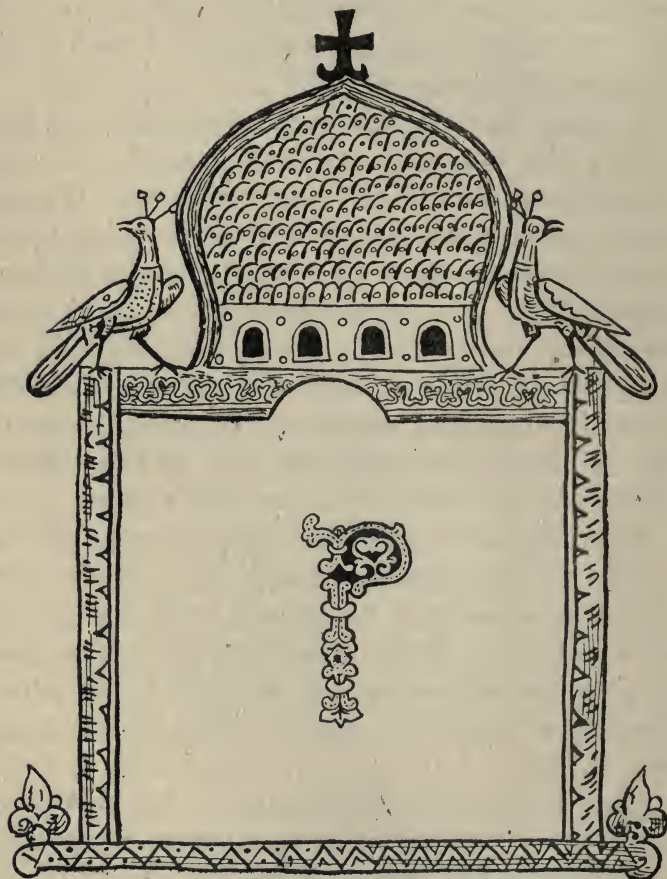
a number of girls, to whom she was dictating the Gospel. Slowly and distinctly she read it out word by word, while twenty hands transcribed the holy words. Her parents stood still in amazement, listening to the clear, sweet tones of their daughter's voice as she dictated: "They brought children unto Him, that He should bless them. Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. . . ."

Suddenly the old Prince turned to his wife and said, "Didst thou hear what the Saviour said? 'Let the children come unto me and hinder them not.' Perhaps we, too, ought not to hinder our child—perhaps, after all, we ought to leave her here. There is so much sorrow in the world, and Gradislava seems to know how to help to lessen it. Although we shall miss her sorely, we must not take her with us; for if we did, hundreds would feel lonely and orphaned instead of just us two." So they left her, and Gradislava remained at the settlement as her sister's helper.

Many thousands she fed and rescued from want and sorrow; many crippled and aged she provided with shelter, and hundreds of orphans were brought up under her hand. Better than all her good deeds, however, was the influence of her daily life, for it infused light, warmth and love into the lives of all around her.

Against the dark background of bloodshed and rapine of that period, these two sisters stood out in all the radiance of their personality as witnesses of the fact that there was another and a better life to be lived—a life of brotherly love. The example they set was an

inspiration, not only to their own generation, but to those that followed after. Like two lilies, pure and white, and exhaling the sweetest perfume, were Predslava and Gradislava, daughters of the fierce warrior-Prince of Polotsk.



ILLUMINATION FROM A MS. GOSPEL OF 1164.
In the Roumyanzev Museum, Moscow.

CHAPTER VI

THE MONGOL INVASION AND ALEXANDER NEVSKI



CASTLE OF NOVGOROD: "WELIKI-NOVGOROD."

From a seventeenth century engraving.

THE Crusades, which had united Christian kings and knights, had all but come to an end, and much Christian blood had been shed on holy soil. In England, Henry III was on the throne, and the first Parliament had met. Russian princes had not taken part in the Crusades, for, during the two centuries which had passed since Vladimir had consolidated his empire, there had been a time of internecine warfare, and after the court of Kiev had ceased to attract foreigners, Russia lost touch with Western Europe. Thus it came about that when, in the early years of the thirteenth century, news reached the Russian princes that a terrible enemy was approaching from the east, they never thought of calling upon the Knights of Western Europe to join them in resisting the pagan foe.

Two of the Khans of the Polovtsi, whose territory

had already been conquered by the invaders, fled into Russia and brought the bad news to Galish, with whose ruler one of them was connected by marriage. Thereupon, Prince Mstislav of Galish invited the other Russian princes, his near relatives, to a conference in Kiev, where the leading princes—those of Kiev, Smolensk, Volhynia and Galicia—met to discuss the situation. The fugitive Khan Khotyan told them of the advancing hordes, who, on being refused a free passage through his country, had invaded and devastated it. In order to gain from the Russian princes a promise of help, he presented them with horses, camels and female slaves, while the other Khan, Bastyi, asked to be baptised into the Christian faith. After long deliberation, the Russian princes decided that when spring came they would go out and meet the enemy, hoping thereby to prevent an invasion of their territory. At the time appointed they set off for the place where they had arranged to meet, and were there joined by other princes and their followers. Envoys from the Mongol leader also made their appearance there in order to offer terms of peace, assuring the Russian princes that, although they had fallen upon the Polovtsi—their “slaves and grooms”—they had no designs on Russia herself, nor had they so much as touched any Russian towns or villages.

The princes, however, took warning from the experience of the Polovtsi, who had been so cruelly deceived by the Tatars, and not only refused to listen to the envoys, but had them put to death. After this the princes moved down the Dnieper, where they were

met by new envoys, who informed them that they had brought war upon themselves by their refusal to believe in Tatar promises.

After a few successful skirmishes on the part of the Russians, the Tatars withdrew eastward, luring them further and further into the Steppes, until they reached the River Kalka, near Lake Azov, where they were unexpectedly attacked by vast hordes of Mongols. Although the Russians made a brave stand, a horrible massacre ensued, in which ten thousand men from Kiev alone were slain, besides six princes and seventy knights. In spite of their valour, the surviving princes had no choice but to flee before the overwhelming forces of the enemy, especially as they were utterly unprepared for such an onslaught. Three of the princes who had been taken alive were put under boards, upon which the Tatars sat and ate their dinner, while the unfortunate victims were slowly squeezed to death. This act was symbolic of the fate which awaited the country.

The Tatars did not penetrate further into Russia, but, crossing the Steppes in a north-easterly direction, conquered the Bulgars on the Kama, and then returned through the Steppes of the Ural and along the shores of the Caspian into Asia, well satisfied with their achievement in having discovered an open road to Europe.

The sudden appearance of these Asiatic hordes and the defeat of the princes had aroused feelings of terror and consternation in Russia. A contemporary chronicler thus voices the popular mind: "There appeared amongst us an unknown people; no one

seemed to know anything about them, their language, or their faith, who they were or whence they came, nor to what tribe they belonged. Some say they are Tatars, some Taurmens, while others take them for Petchenegs."

The answer to these questions came fifteen years later at the cost of bitter experience, and the Russians found them what the conquered people of Asia had found the hordes of Ghengis Khan to be—arrogant, cruel, treacherous and bloodthirsty, lacking in gratitude and generosity, caring for nothing but robbery and loot. No wonder if they were consumed with pride, for had not this small Tatar tribe, a mere vassal of China, become a conquering race? Ghengis Khan, with his horsemen, had made himself the terror of Asia, and all those whom he allowed to live bowed before him.

These shepherd warriors who had come from the northern slopes of the Altai, or "Golden Mountains," were ungainly in appearance, with long bodies and short legs, their wide-set eyes seemed to bulge out from horizontal slits in their faces; the nose was wide and flat, and on the upper lip sprouted a few straggling hairs; the front of the head was shaven in the form of a horse-shoe, as a symbol of their centaur power, and on either side were patches of long hair which hung in plaits over the ears. They were uncouth in manner, filthy in their habits, and their diet was disgusting: they ate all manner of vermin, they specially enjoyed the warm blood of horses, while their favourite drink was that most intoxicating beverage, fermented mare's milk—koumiss.

The first expedition into Russia had merely whetted

the appetite of the Tatars, and in 1236 Batu Khan, to whom Ghengis Khan had apportioned the western part of his Empire, invaded Russia with 300,000 men. This grandson of the great Mongol leader sent envoys to the Prince of Ryazan to demand in tribute one tenth of everything he possessed, men and horses included, but the answer he received was that all the Russian lands would be his when there was no longer a Russian prince left alive.

Like a prairie fire the Tatars spread across Russia in different directions, and within thirty days fourteen towns fell into their hands—Ryazan, Suzdal, Vladimir, Moscow, Rostov, Yaroslav, Gorodetz, Galitch, Tver and others, the inhabitants of which were all massacred. These ruthless conquerors were adepts in the art of besieging towns : they cut off the water supply, threw up earthworks, used battering-rams, cast burning balls of naphtha, mixed with human fat, into the cities, and although they usually promised the besieged citizens life and property on condition of voluntary surrender, they rarely, if ever, kept their word. Even if they did not kill every inhabitant, as was frequently the case, all the wealthy people were sure to be put to death. When the premier prince of Russia, the Grand Duke Yuri of Vladimir, who had been assured that if he remained neutral his country would be unmolested, heard of the destruction of his capital and the murder of his family, whom the Tatars had burnt alive in a church, he went out to meet the cruel foe, intending to give battle ; but the horror of the Tatars fell upon his men, who became utterly demoralized and fled in confusion, while all those who stood by him were killed.

The victorious Khan next captured the town of Torja in the face of strenuous resistance, and, having slaughtered all the inhabitants, he passed on, mowing down like grass the people who came in his way. All prisoners of war were killed, with the exception of artisans, who were taken away as slaves ; indeed, there was a regular system for the killing of prisoners, so many Mongols having so many prisoners handed over to them for slaughter.

Terror had taken hold of the citizens of Novgorod, the rich and important trading centre of Russia, for they realized that their turn would come next ; therefore, much prayer and supplication was offered up by the devout-minded people. To their intense relief, the city escaped the terrible fate which had been meted out to the others, for with the approach of spring the Khan, fearing lest he should be caught in the swamps surrounding Novgorod, turned away to the south-west and attacked and besieged Koselsk, where he met with a stubborn resistance. It was the only town which did not fall into his hands after a few days' siege, but held out for two months. The citizens had decided to withstand him to the uttermost, for "although our Prince is but a boy," they said, "we willingly lay down our lives for him and thus win glory in this world and heavenly crowns in the world to come." As elsewhere, however, so also here the walls finally fell before the battering-rams of the Tatars ; yet the resistance only came to an end when the last man was killed. No one knows what happened to the young Prince, but he was believed to have been drowned in the sea of blood which flowed down the streets of his city. Satisfied

with the havoc wrought and with the booty taken, the Khan now returned to Asia, but two years later he swooped down again upon Russia. This time, however, it was the southern part which he and his hordes overran. It seemed as though nothing could arrest their progress, and at last they came to the banks of the Dnieper and stood facing Kiev, the fame of which had reached the ears of Batu. Struck by the beauty of the city, his nephew, who had been sent in advance, offered to spare it on condition of surrender, but his proposals were proudly rejected and his envoys killed.

In the winter of 1240, Batu Khan began the siege of Kiev, and, to quote the words of the chronicler, "Men could not hear themselves speak for the screeching of cart-wheels, the grunting of innumerable camels, the neighing of horses, and the roar of voices from the great multitude of men." After an heroic resistance, the premier town of Russia fell into the hands of the ruthless foe, of whom an English contemporary relates that "they are above all men covetous, nasty, deceitful and merciless," and that "they think all things are created for their benefit."

With fire and sword everything was destroyed. The beautiful ancient capital of Russia was turned into a heap of ashes, and the surrounding country devastated. So awful, indeed, was the state of Russia that a celebrated preacher of this period describes his unhappy fatherland thus: "Our churches are demolished, our sanctuaries desecrated, and the sacred vessels defiled; the bodies of monks have been cast out as carrion, and the land has been saturated with the blood

of our fathers and brothers as with water. Vanished are the strongholds of our princes and rulers, even the brave have fled in terror ; the majority of our brothers and of our children have been taken into captivity ; over our village streets the grass is growing, our land has become the prey of the alien, and the fruit of our labour is enjoyed by the infidel."

After the sack of Kiev the victorious Mongol hordes passed on into Volhynia and Galicia; then crossed the Carpathians into Hungary, and, having devastated that country, turned northward into Silesia and Moravia. It was their custom to send some 5000 riders in advance, who, mounted on specially fleet horses, would often accomplish a three days' journey in a single night. This advance guard did not burn or plunder, but merely wounded or mutilated the peaceful inhabitants in order to strike terror into the hearts of the people, so that their rulers would be unable to offer organized resistance—a thing they always tried to prevent. They did not like to be met man to man, but revelled in hacking their way through the people as they flew by them on horseback. An Englishman who had drifted into Tatar, and whom Batu Khan attached to his person as interpreter, thus describes the methods employed by the Mongols: "They delude all people in times of peace, pretending to the princes of regions that for a cause—which, indeed, is no cause—they desire to pass through their land. In regard to which sleights and collusions certain indiscreet governors, concluding a league with them, have granted them free passage through their territories ; which leagues, notwithstanding, being violated,

were an occasion of ruin and destruction unto the aforesaid governors. . . .”

Leaving Moravia, Batu now returned to Hungary, intending to invade Austria, but on the borders of this country the Tatars received their first check. A great army under the leadership of the King of Moravia, the Duke of Austria and other famous warrior princes, “with mighty power and in battle array,” advanced to meet them. Whereupon “that accursed crew immediately vanished, and all those Tatarian vagabonds retired themselves into the distressed and vanquished land of Hungaria, who, as they came suddenly, so departed also on the sudden, while their celerity caused all men to stand in horror and astonishment of them.”

Thus did Batu Khan turn tail before organized resistance. He and his hordes retraced their steps through southern Russia, along a path strewn with the bleaching bones of the victims of their former raid, until they reached the eastern banks of the Volga, where they settled down permanently.

Here Batu founded Sarai, which became the capital of the Golden Horde (or Golden Camp), whence he held sway over Russia, whose princes had to travel from all parts of the country to pay him homage. Russia thus sank to the level of a mere province of the vast Mongol Empire, and not infrequently Batu would send Russian princes right into Central Asia to the Great Khan, whose representative he was in Europe.

Western Europe was spared the horrors of a Tatar invasion ; but Russia, having succumbed, found out by bitter experience who were these ruthless, merciless hordes which, only a few years previously, had fallen

upon them suddenly like a plague of locusts. "They are called Tatars," writes the painfully-enlightened chronicler, "and for our sins these pagans have come upon us."

Indeed, the Mongol invasion was looked upon as a punishment to the nation for their "unchristian morals," and as the consciousness of this grew upon the people they gradually "became established in the faith and more moral in conduct."

The Mongols, however, were not the only foes with which the Russians had to contend, for Lithuanians, Germans and Swedes were also a constant menace. Of all the cities of northern Russia, Novgorod alone had escaped destruction at the hands of the Tatars; but while Batu Khan was sacking Kiev, the Republics of Novgorod and Pskov were being invaded by Swedes and Germans.

Prince Alexander Yaroslavovitch was at this time the military chief of Novgorod, where he had been known from childhood, for his father, Yaroslav, Grand Duke of Suzdal, had also ruled Novgorod in his day. In 1236, his eldest son, Alexander, was made Prince of Novgorod, and the memory of this noble character still lives in the hearts of the people. History and literature, sacred and profane, speak of him as a great hero. Every inch a prince, his strength has been compared by the chronicler with that of Samson, and his beauty with that of Joseph. We read that "his eye was clear and penetrating, and his voice like a silver trumpet." The fame of his wisdom and statesmanship spread far and wide, and attracted to his side knights from distant lands, who remained to swell the number of his Boyars.

One of the Teutonic knights who had visited the youthful prince in the hope of settling peaceably the perpetual feuds between his order and Novgorod, writes of Alexander Yaroslavovitch : "I have traversed many lands, and I know much of the world and its people and rulers, but never have I looked upon or listened to any one who has filled me with greater wonder than Alexander of Novgorod."

The first to realize the correctness of the reports about Alexander were the Swedes, whose territories adjoined those of Novgorod at a point not far from the Neva, where the Swedes had built a fortress. The Pope himself had sent priests, skilled in building as well as in warfare, to erect this outpost against the schismatic Russians, whom he stigmatized as rebels because of their refusal to acknowledge his supremacy. In the year 1240 the Swedes, at his instigation, started a crusade against the Russians, and a large expedition, led by the Regent of Sweden, Birger Jarl, sailed down through the Gulf of Finland into the Neva ; the plan being to enter Lake Ladoga, and to proceed along the river Volkhof until Novgorod was reached, and then to attack and humble that proud city. The Swedish general was so sure of victory that when the ships had sailed only a little way up the Neva he sent the following message to Alexander : "If thou canst resist me, do so ; but I am close upon thee, and am already occupying thy lands."

If this expedition was a crusade to the Swedes, it was no less a holy war to the Russians, and Alexander decided to go out in person to meet the foe. Before starting on his campaign he went to the cathedral,

where, in earnest supplication, he prayed for success ; and having received the Archbishop's blessing, the gallant Prince turned to his followers and encouraged them with these words : " God is not with Might but with Right. Some trust in weapons, some in horses ; but we will call on the name of the Lord."

On Sunday, July 15th, 1240, he suddenly attacked the encamped Swedes, who, taken unawares, were flung into confusion. They had little chance of making a successful stand against the vigorous onslaught of the Russians, who fell upon them furiously with sword and battle-axe. One daring citizen of Novgorod succeeded in sinking three Swedish ships ; others with their swords slashed open the gorgeous tent of the Swedish general, and were mightily pleased to find it full of treasure. Birger Yarl himself escaped, but not before Alexander had thrust a lance into his face, thereby " putting his seal upon the foe." The battle raged the whole day, and only under cover of the night could the Swedes take to their ships and sail away. The Russians firmly believe that the victory was due to the assistance of two saints—Boris and Gleb, sons of St. Vladimir ; for, as Alexander was nearing the border of Novgorod territories, he was met by a watchman from an outpost, who had come to report a wonderful vision which had appeared to him on the previous night. He had seen a rowing boat, in the middle of which stood two saints in shining garments, with glistening crowns on their heads. The lonely watcher heard St. Boris say to St. Gleb, " Brother Gleb, give orders to the rowers, for we must go to the assistance of our kinsman Alexander."



ALEXANDER NEVSKI BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE.

From the painting by Kramskoi.

In honour of this wonderful victory on the Neva, the people of Novgorod bestowed upon Alexander the title of "Nevski," or "Of the Neva." Yet, in spite of his having delivered their Republic, quarrels soon arose between the Vetché, or Council, and Alexander, who, disgusted with the ingratitude shown to him, shook the dust of Novgorod from off his feet and rejoined his father. Before long, however, the citizens regretted their quarrel, for although they were now safe from the Swedes, their other enemy, the German Knights of Livonia, were threatening them. This decided the Council of Novgorod to send messengers to the Grand Duke of Suzdal, imploring him to send his son Alexander to their rescue; but it was another son, Andrew, who was sent in his stead. By no means satisfied, the Novgorodians despatched new envoys to plead for the return of the only man in whom they could place complete confidence. Attended by many nobles, the Archbishop appealed in person to Alexander, who yielded at last, promising to forgive and forget. He returned with the envoys to Novgorod, where his longed-for arrival was greeted with much rejoicing. Having quickly collected a large force, he defeated the German Knights, between whom and the Russians there had long been a growing animosity. These Knights had conquered Livonia, and christianized her heathen people by means of fire and sword, but, not content with converting pagans, they had also tried their hand on those Russians who, in the days of Yaroslav (1015-1054) had settled in Livonia. This led to perpetual friction, for the intolerance of the Knights infuriated the people of Novgorod, who, in their turn,

were accused by Knights and Swedes of supporting the heathen in their opposition to Christianity. Quite recently the Knights had conquered Pskov, which was now ruled by a German Stadthalter, who was supported by several of the leading citizens, traitors to their country. The whole countryside was being kept in such a state of terror that all work in the fields had ceased. Even merchants travelling to Novgorod were taken captive and robbed of all their merchandise. Indeed Alexander realized that not only Novgorod but all Russia was endangered by these Teutonic raiders.

After capturing the fort of Koporye, Alexander advanced upon Pskov, which he speedily wrested from the Germans, many of whom he sent in chains to Novgorod, where seventy of the Knights were beheaded as an example to the rest. The far-sighted Russian leader rightly assumed that the powerful German Order would make an endeavour to avenge this defeat, and early in 1242 the opposing forces met near Lake Tchoudovo which was still covered with ice, though spring was fast approaching.

Before entering on this bloody contest, Alexander Nevski lifted up his hands and prayed aloud: "Judge, O Lord, and settle the dispute between us and this overbearing people, and not unto us but to Thy Name be glory." The Germans attacked with fury, driving a wedge into the Russian ranks, with the intention of separating their enemy into two parts. For the moment it seemed as if they would be successful, but the valiant Russians held their ground; and Alexander, making a flank counter-attack, routed the Germans, who fled,

pursued by the victorious Novgorodians. Five hundred of the German Knights, besides innumerable Livonians and Finns, were slain, and for a stretch of seven miles the ice was strewn with corpses. Therefore this combat has ever since been known as "The Battle of the Ice," although some chroniclers speak of it as "The Blood Bath on the Ice"—for the surface was flooded with the blood of the defeated foe.

Terror-stricken, and in momentary expectation of an invasion of Livonia by the victorious Alexander, the Grand Master of the Order sent an appeal for help to the King of Denmark. The Russian leader, however, considered the lesson he had given the imperious Germans quite sufficient, and returned to Pskov in a triumphal procession, with fifty Knights walking behind him in full armour, but barefoot, with heads bowed and eyes cast on the ground. At the gates of the city he was met by the clergy and by a joyous, grateful people, who hailed him as their deliverer. Overcome with emotion, Alexander Nevski thus addressed the citizens: "O, ye people of Pskov, should you ever forget Alexander, and should even my most remote descendants fail in time of misfortune to find in you faithful supporters, ye will be for ever an example of ingratitude."

Novgorod rejoiced with Pskov over her deliverance, and, not long after, peace was concluded between the two Republics and the Teutonic Order.

Alexander Nevski had yet another enemy to contend with—the Lithuanians—who also attacked Novgorod, and several fierce battles had to be fought before this enemy was subdued. Delivered from all her external foes, Novgorod flourished as a trading centre, and

increased more and more in power, riches and territory, until finally all Northern Russia to the shores of the White Sea and to the slopes of the Ural Mountains belonged to the Republics.

All Russians were proud of Alexander Nevski, but what lent the greatest lustre to his name was the fact that he alone of all the Russian princes owed no allegiance to the Mongol Khan ; therefore the people called him their "Independent Prince." Batu Khan, however, resented this independence, and sent the following message to Alexander : "Prince of Novgorod ! Is it not known to thee that God has put many nations under my feet ? Wilt thou be the only one to deny me the homage that is my due ? If thou desirest to reign in peace, present thyself without delay before my tent, where thou shalt behold the pride and glory of the Mongols."

Had Alexander followed the dictates of his proud and independent spirit, he would have refused to obey this arrogant command ; but he loved his people, and desired above all things to spare them the misery that would surely ensue should he displease the Mongol Khan. He therefore decided to set out on his journey to Sarai, which he found on his arrival to consist entirely of tents, covering a large area of ground. In the midst of the camp stood the gorgeous tent of Batu, which he had carried away as booty from Hungary.

As soon as he heard that Alexander had arrived, the Khan sent for him, but before being permitted to come into the Mongol's presence, the Russian was told to pass between two fires and bow in reverence before the sun. This, however, the Christian prince refused

to do, and when his refusal was reported to the Khan, he was so impressed by his visitor's manly courage that he instantly gave orders for Alexander Nevski to be brought into his presence without further ceremony, and with all due honour and respect. On entering the tent, which was ablaze with oriental splendour, Alexander beheld the stately, magnificent Khan of the Golden Horde, sitting with two or three of his wives on a raised, gilded couch.

Batu soon realized that the report which had reached his ears of Alexander Nevski's fame had not been exaggerated: he found this prince a head and shoulders above all the others who had been to his tent. After expressing his pleasure at meeting with the famous Russian, he granted his request that he might be allowed to buy off a number of his unfortunate fellow-countrymen who had been carried into captivity by the Khan; but to Alexander's disappointment, Batu Khan, instead of letting him return to Russia, insisted upon his travelling on into Tataria to pay homage to the Emperor of the Mongols, then at his summer residence in Karakorum, in the Desert of Gobi. It was a terrible journey, the Russians being tormented by hunger and thirst; indeed, many of them fell by the way, and their bones increased the number of skulls and skeletons which already marked out the desert track.

At the court of the Emperor, Alexander merely swelled the number of rulers and ambassadors who had come from far and near to bring tribute or to do obeisance to the great Khan. All these representatives, whether of the Greek Emperor, the King of France, the King of Georgia or the Pope, were exposed to the

insolence and extortions of the Mongol Emperor's entourage, of whom the Pope's legate wrote, "They are the most intolerable exacters, most covetous possessors, and most niggardly givers . . . and if a man bestow aught upon them, it is but generosity lost, for they are thankless wretches. They esteem themselves lords, and think nothing should be denied them by any man. . . . We departed from them. And in very deed it seemed to me that we were escaped out of the hands of devils."

After an absence of nearly two years, Alexander Nevski returned to Russia, having received from the Great Khan the dignity of Grand Duke of Kiev; but as this principality was in a state of utter ruin and in the hands of Mongol officials, he went to Novgorod, where he was received with joy by the people. Unfortunately, his stay amongst them was soon cut short, for again he had to undertake the journey to Sarai, this time to intercede for one of his brothers who had incurred the displeasure of the Khan. Alexander succeeded in his quest, and also obtained for himself the recognition of his right to the title of Grand Duke of Suzdal, which had been denied him on his first visit.

On his return from this second journey, Alexander had to contend with various civic troubles, which he had hardly settled when the Swedes and Finns began to raid the country. Thereupon he sent an embassy to King Haakon of Norway, urging him to restrain his unruly subjects. This representation, backed up by some successful punitive expeditions, had at last the desired effect, and Novgorod was left in peace by her northern foes.

About this period Alexander was visited by two cardinals, who brought him a personal letter from the Pope, telling him that his father, while visiting the Khan, was on the point of accepting the Roman faith when death suddenly overtook him. This, the Pope said, he knew for certain, as his legate, Johannes de Plano Carpini, had met the Grand Duke in Karakorum, and had been commissioned by him to urge his son Alexander to enter the true fold and obey the representative of God upon earth, and thereby save his own soul and secure happiness and blessing for his people. Besides, Russia would gain in every respect if in union with the Western Church. He added that Alexander, as a true servant of Christ, ought to advise the Livonian Knights of any new move or invasion on the part of the Mongols. The Pope concluded his letter with praise of Alexander's independent attitude towards the Khan, for he had not yet heard of his humiliating journey to the Great Khan.

Having read the letter, Alexander called his councillors together, and, after careful deliberation, sent the Pope a reply to the effect that he and his people had the true teaching, and that he would have nothing to do with the Pope's proposals.

Once again the Grand Duke was obliged to set off on an expedition to the Golden Horde, owing to the death of Batu Khan, whose successor was threatening to invade northern Russia and make it tributary to himself. In the hopes of saving his hitherto free country from this awful calamity, Alexander went laden with rich presents for the new Khan, who accepted them with alacrity ; nevertheless, he demanded that

Novgorod also should henceforth pay tribute. As his one desire was to save the proud city from destruction, Alexander had no choice but to submit, and, accompanied by Tatar tax-gatherers, he returned to his city, where the terrible task awaited him of informing the free citizens that they, too, must now bend under the Mongol yoke. The people were horror-stricken at the news, and, at the arrival of the Tatar officials who had come to take a census for the purpose of levying tribute, the Novgorodians offered passive resistance, while at the same time they forced presents upon the Tatars in order to get rid of them.

Novgorod thus succeeded in gaining a respite, but, two years later, hearing that the Tatar hordes were on their way to coerce the rebellious republicans to obedience, the citizens bowed to the inevitable, and the last free Russian principality became a vassal state of the Khan. At first the Tatar officials themselves collected the tribute, but after a while they farmed it out to the Asiatic merchants from Khiva and other parts. These merchants ruthlessly exacted far more than their due from the unfortunate Russians, who, when unable to pay, were carried away into captivity.

Suddenly, as if by design, but in reality quite spontaneously, the exasperated people of northern Russia rose up with one accord and turned on these extortioners who had so tormented them. In Yaroslavl, a renegade monk and notorious tax-gatherer was murdered and his body thrown to the dogs. Adding insult to injury, and conscious of the Khan's favour, he had not only oppressed the people, but had offended them by reviling their faith.

This rising against the Mongol officials so incensed the Khan that, in order to placate his anger, Alexander Nevski travelled again to the Golden Horde to appeal to him in person, but it was only with the utmost difficulty that he succeeded in persuading the Khan to forego his revenge. The Prince managed at the same time to settle another matter which had greatly troubled him, namely, the Khan's desire that the Russian princes should send him troops to take part in his campaigns. For nearly a year the Russian ruler had to live in Sarai as a humble suppliant at the court of Batu Khan's successor.

The strain of physical hardship as well as of moral suffering had gradually undermined the health of the Grand Duke to such an extent that, on his return journey, and before he could even reach his capital, he fell seriously ill. The Prince, who had given his strength so freely for his people, now desired to spend the short time left to him in preparation for his approaching death, and, according to a custom prevalent at this time, he took the monastic vow.

On his death-bed the noble warrior-prince gently requested his weeping people not to grieve so deeply, as their distress was troubling his soul; and a few days later, surrounded by his devoted and now heart-broken friends and followers, he succumbed to a mortal disease.

When the news of his death reached the Metropolitan of Vladimir, who was in the act of conducting a service in the cathedral, he addressed his congregation as follows, "My dear children, the sun has set for Russia!" Then, breaking down with emotion, he

uttered these simple but ominous words, "Alexander is dead!" The full weight of this announcement was at once realized by all who heard it, for to everyone Alexander Nevski seemed indispensable; he had been their shield and protector, their interceder and friend. The tears shed over his death came straight from the heart of a loving and grateful people, and so unrestrained was the sorrow at his funeral that the choir could not sing for emotion, and the "earth herself seemed to groan in sympathy." Even the proud citizens of Novgorod, with whom he had had frequent disputes, were unanimous in their sorrow over his decease. They prayed fervently for the soul of this valiant knight, "for," said they, "he has laboured much on behalf of Novgorod and all the Russian lands." Thus died, in 1263, Alexander Nevski, beloved and honoured.

Although more than a century elapsed before he was canonized by the Church, the people at once bestowed upon their beloved prince the tender and loving prefix of Saint, believing that as he had interceded for them on earth with the Khan, he would, now that he was in heaven, become their guardian angel. Soon many legends grew up around this famous national hero, and the pious thoughts of the people ascribed to his name many a deed of blessing to his country. He appeared in visions, and his relics were said to have cured many sick who visited his tomb; but his actual canonization did not take place until the year 1380, and November 23 has ever since been dedicated to Alexander, the patron saint of Russia.

Nearly three and a half centuries later, Alexander

Nevski's descendant, Peter the Great, wrested from the Swedes the shores of the river Neva, and it seemed to him only fair that the remains of his great ancestor, who had won fame in the battle of the Neva, should rest in the new capital on that very river. Peter the Great also instituted the order of Alexander Nevski, and gave to it the noble motto, "For Labour and for the Fatherland," a permanent reminder of the great prince who spent his strength in labouring for his country.



TATAR ON HORSEBACK.

From Ides-Isbrant, *Three Years' Travels*, 1706.

CHAPTER VII

DMITRI DONSKOI AND THE BATTLE OF KULIKOVO



WARRIORS RIDING INTO BATTLE.

From a fourteenth century MS.

MORE than a century had passed since Russia had become a mere principality of the Mongol Empire, and Alexander Nevski had obeyed the command of Batu Khan to appear before him, as his father and the other princes had done. What Johannes de Plano Carpini, the

Pope's legate to the Mongol Emperor, describes as having been witnessed by him at that far away court in Tataria in 1246—"without the doore stode Duke Yeroslaus of Suzdal in Russia"—was, unfortunately, still typical of the position of the Russian princes. They were but humiliated petitioners for Tatar favours, forced to bring presents, to bribe, to cringe before their overlord, under whose iron rule Russia groaned as under a burden too heavy to be borne. If princes wished to be unmolested by the Khan,

they had to bribe him until he gave, or more often sold, to them a "Yarlyik," or letters patent, which confirmed them in their position as rulers of their own principalities. As to the dignity of Grand Duke, this matter was usually settled by the Khan according to the value of the presents brought to him. Thus it became the custom for the princes to visit the Khan at Sarai, whence, however, many of them never returned, for the poisoned cup or the executioner's axe made short work of fractious or inconvenient dignitaries.

The representatives of the Khan in Russia were the Baskaki, whose favour the princes did their utmost to win, in the hope of obtaining advantages for themselves and some slight concessions for their people. On the other hand, quarrels with these officials proved disastrous, for they had to be settled by the Khan, whose judgment was always in favour of the Baskak.

The people of Russia, however, came very little into touch with the Tatars ; all they were conscious of was the fact that they had to pay taxes, which were ruthlessly exacted from them, and woe to those who did not bring in the prescribed number of skins or other articles commandeered. The numerous Mongol officials lived on the people, whom they sucked dry. Utterly helpless and unprotected, the common people groaned under the burden, for the road to Sarai was long, and who would listen to their complaints even if they succeeded in reaching that place ? Occasionally, however, some prince or bishop would plead for them, for high dignitaries of the Church frequently visited the Golden Horde. Some of the Metropolitans even

acquired great influence, for, in conformity with the principles laid down by Genghis Khan, religious toleration was practised, all Church lands and monasteries being exempt from taxation.

In course of time the Russian princes themselves became the chief tax-gatherers on behalf of the Khan, who was satisfied as long as tribute was duly delivered. This position of tax-gatherer proved, however, very demoralizing, since the princes often developed the habit of exacting more tribute than was demanded by their Mongol overlord; some even extorted double the sum required, the surplus, of course, remaining in their own pockets. The influence of the Mongols degraded all who had to deal with them, and all true manliness and every desire for independence seemed to have died out of Russia. The princes were drawn more and more into intercourse with the Tatars, and gradually became satisfied to rule by favour of the Khans. Even marriage relations were entered into with the Mongols, and some princes went so far as to make use of Tatar troops in private feuds. Thus infidels were actually employed by Christian Russians against their own kith and kin.

It was by these means that certain princes increased in power, especially those of Moscow, who frequently received the coveted *Yarlyiks* which conferred upon them the dignity of Grand Dukes, and as such they wielded authority over the others. Thus, unobserved by the Mongol rulers, a menace to their own domination was arising in Muscovy, which was steadily increasing in power through the very favour of the Khans. As yet, however, though now and then some

prince might have a vision of the day when Russia would be free from the Mongol domination, there was no solidarity amongst her rulers, and the herculean task of breaking the shackles, so securely fastened, was more than one man could accomplish alone.

Such were the conditions of Russia in the fourteenth century, during which time England was engaged in the Hundred Years' War with France, and the Battle of Crecy was fought, while at home Wyclif was preaching against the priest, and Wat Tyler was heading his rebellion.

At last there arose for Russia the man who was destined to strike a blow at the Tatars, and thereby permanently weaken their power. This man was Prince Dmitri Ivanovitch of Muscovy. When Dmitri was a child of nine years old, his father, a quiet, gentle prince, had died, and thereupon his uncle promptly usurped the title of Grand Duke. The boyars, however, brought the boy to the Golden Horde, where they purchased for him the *Yarlyk* which conferred upon him the dignity of Grand Duke. They took this step because they feared the loss of the hegemony enjoyed by Moscow since the days of Ivan Kalita (1328-1340), Dmitri's grandfather, under whose strong and unscrupulous rule Muscovy had risen to prestige and power.

In the meantime a danger from the West was threatening the newly-acquired power of Muscovy—namely, Lithuania, whose princes, Gedemin and Olgerd, were great statesmen; for many of the Russian princes had preferred to owe allegiance to these rulers rather than to recognize the Tatar-fostered superiority

of the princes of Moscow. There were perpetual feuds between Moscow and other towns and principalities, especially those of Ryazan and Tver, while the arrogance of Muscovy was particularly galling to the people of Nijni-Novgorod.

When, therefore, Dmitri took up the reins of government in 1363, he had no easy task before him ; for three foes had to be overcome—Tver, Lithuania and the Tatars. First it was Tver which gave him the most trouble, in spite of the fact that, during one of his visits to the Golden Horde, Dmitri had ransomed the young son of the Prince of Tver for ten thousand roubles, the sum for which his father had pawned him to the Tatars, but of which he now demanded repayment from the Prince of Tver. On the Tatar side, a new and hitherto undreamt of danger was menacing Russia. News spread that Mamai, the virtual ruler—although not yet the Khan—of the Golden Horde, was planning a new invasion into Russia, and this time for the purpose not only of devastating the land, but also of extirpating the Christian faith. The pretext for this invasion was punishment for what Mamai considered Dmitri's ingratitude and independent attitude with regard to the payment of tribute ; for Dmitri, while visiting Sarai, had witnessed the weakening of the Khan's authority, and had refused to pay the same amount of tribute as in former days. Therefore, when Mamai became Khan, he decided to satisfy his feelings of revenge towards proud Muscovy. The power of the Khans, however, had been weakened to such an extent in consequence of gradual internal disintegration by the splitting up of the Golden Horde into lesser

Khanates, that Mamai was obliged to follow the advice of his councillors, who said, "Thy horde is exhausted, but thou hast wealth, therefore hire Genoese, Tcherkess, Yassi and others." This he did, but he proudly refused the assistance offered to him by Dmitri's arch-enemies, the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the Prince of Tver.

These two rulers calculated that Dmitri would flee before Mamai's hordes, and that, after having levied another heavy tribute on Muscovy, the Mongols would withdraw. It would then be their opportunity to divide the weakened principality between themselves. They had reckoned without their host. The approaching danger aroused in Dmitri all his latent powers of leadership, and he immediately called upon the nation to rally round him. From all parts his call found ready response, and from all over the country men flocked to his standard, and whole towns were arming in preparation for the contest. It seemed as though the nation had only been waiting for a deliverer, as if the people of Russia were awakening out of a deep sleep. The nightmare of the Tatar oppression was passing away, and at last they were beginning to feel themselves able to withstand the awful and hitherto invincible foe. With the exception of Oleg of Tver, who pretended to be on the side of Dmitri, but, in reality, meant to join Mamai, all the princes threw in their lot with Dmitri.

Unity among the princes was a new and unprecedented sight, and, according to the chronicler, for the first time in the annals of Russian history, her rulers preferred death to bondage.

For the Russian people this was a holy war, and all were willing to die for their faith. Every one did his or her share towards serving the fatherland, "some with the sword, others with prayer . . ." and on the zeal and devotion of the people rested the benediction of the clergy.

When the Mongol leader heard of all these doings, he tried to settle matters amicably with the Grand Duke. He therefore sent envoys, who demanded an increased tribute as the price of staying his hand. Dmitri, however, proudly refused to pay one additional kopeck to the sum agreed upon during his last visit to Sarai.

There had been some divergence of opinion amongst the princes who had joined Dmitri as to the best plan of action, some urging him not to venture to meet the foe, for they pointed out that besides the Tatars there were other enemies, the Lithuanians and the people of Tver. Others said, "Go forth to the Don ;" and this was the advice he followed, for, he maintained, "it is better to die an honourable death than to retain life at the cost of honour." Away from his capital rode the gallant prince to lead his warriors to victory. "God is with us," he cried, as he waved farewell to his weeping wife.

But before starting he visited Sergei Radonejski, the venerable and saintly Abbot of the Troitsa Monastery, who gave him his blessing, saying, "Go forward, and the Holy Trinity will assist thee." He predicted victory to the Russian armies, but at the cost of terrible bloodshed : many heroes would fall, yet the Grand Duke himself would escape with his life. At

the latter's request he selected two monks who, in former years, had been boyars and well fitted to stand by their leader, to go with him into battle. As they knelt before him for his parting blessing, Sergei performed the symbolic action of covering them with a monk's habit embroidered with a cross, saying, "This is your weapon, may it serve to protect you." The Bishop of Kolomna also blessed Dmitri in his crusade "against the accursed eaters of raw flesh, against the infamous Yagiello of Lithuania and the treacherous Oleg of Tver."

On rode Dmitri until he reached the banks of the river Don where the Tatars were encamped. On the eve of the battle Dmitri and the other princes and leaders of the Russian Army stood on a hill to review the vast host. It was a glorious sight which presented itself to their gaze, for the helmets, inlaid with gold, had caught the rays of the sun. The icon of the Saviour on the Grand Duke's standard shone with a radiant light. Nature herself seemed to be in sympathy with the great event, for during that night the watching Russians heard beautiful music in the air, while from the Tatar camp came the howling of wolves and the croaking of ravens.

Next morning the gallant Russians were drawn up in battle array. Dmitri stood on the hillock overlooking the field of Kulikovo, and the chronicler tells us that, when he heard the sound of thousands of Russian voices calling upon God—"Lord, give victory to our Leader!"—he fell on his knees and, lifting up his eyes to the image of the Saviour on his standard, prayed again earnestly that his fatherland

might be delivered out of the hands of the infidel. Then he rode straight up to the lines and spoke words of encouragement to his men, calling them his faithful friends, and promising them glory in this life and a martyr's crown in the life to come.

The princes implored Dmitri not to expose himself to danger; "for," said they, "it is the duty of a leader to watch the battle, to take note of deeds of valour, so that those who deserve it may be rewarded. We are all willing to lay down our lives, but thou, beloved Prince, must live and pass on our memory to future generations. Without thee we cannot hope for victory." Such advice, however, the gallant Grand Duke could not follow. "Where you are, there must I be also. How can I ask others to die for the fatherland while I myself remain in safety. I must be your leader, not only in word but in deed." Then, with the words of the psalmist—"God is our refuge and strength"—on his lips, he led his followers to the attack. It was not until the fight became general that he withdrew from the forefront of the battle which was more bloody and more awful than had ever been witnessed before in the history of Russia. The Tatar cavalry rode into the ranks of the Russian infantry, trampling them under their horses' feet, and mowing them down like grass. Blood flowed like water, and the corpses lay so thick upon the ground that many a living man was crushed to death under the heap of dead, and for a distance of ten versts the battle surged with fury. Some of the younger men of the Muscovite army, who had never been in action before, succumbed to panic and fled, thus leaving the



DMITRI DONSKOI BEING BLESSED BY SERGEI RADONEJSKI.

From the painting by N. Novoskoltsev.

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way open for the Tatars to make a rush towards the Grand Duke's standard, and all seemed lost. Yet towards evening fortune favoured the Russians, and what had threatened to become a complete rout turned into a glorious though dearly-bought victory.

At a little distance from the field of battle, hidden in a wood under cover of the trees, stood some picked regiments commanded by the young prince Vladimir, who longed to throw himself into the fray, but, on the advice of that experienced old warrior, Dmitri Bobrok of Volhynia, he restrained himself for a while, intently watching the furious combat. But at last he could endure it no longer, and called out, "Dmitri Bobrok, why are we doing nothing? Who benefits by our standing here idle? I tell you evil will come of it."

"Yes," said the old warrior in reply, things are in a very bad way, but the time has not yet come for us to strike. He who attacks at the wrong moment does so to his hurt. Let us pray to God and wait until the eighth hour—then . . . may God help us to go forward."

The plight of the Russians became worse and worse—it seemed as though the Tatars were annihilating them. The men in ambush, chafing at the restraint put upon them, began to protest vehemently against being held back, but Bobrok rebuked them, saying, "Wait, have patience, you silly Russian children." They fumed and fretted, but obeyed, having confidence in their gruff old leader; and at the very moment when the Tatars seemed to have secured the victory, he called out, "Prince Vladimir! and you,

ye sons of Russia, brothers and friends, the hour has come—now is our time to strike, and may the Holy Spirit help and guide us !” Then he with his fresh troops rushed forth and attacked the foe. The Tatars, already exhausted by long hours of warfare, were taken aback by the unexpectedness of the onslaught, and seeing themselves attacked on both flanks, were seized with panic. They turned and fled.

It is reported that when the great Tatar leader saw this rout of his army, he joined in the flight, crying, “Great is the God of the Christians !” Encouraged by this turn of the tide, the Russians pursued the enemy until they reached the river Metcha, where many more Tatars were slain and many were drowned. Their camp, full of treasure and booty, fell into the hands of the Russian victors.

In this battle, the most famous of Russian history until the Battle of Poltava in 1712, the Russians are said to have been outnumbered by four to one.

When all was over, Prince Dmitri Bobrok gathered the princes together, but nowhere was the Grand Duke to be found. Dreading lest their beloved leader should have fallen a prey to the foe, they searched for him in every direction. At last they found him lying on the ground under a tree, where he had been knocked off his horse by a blow. Bending tenderly over the apparently lifeless form of the Prince, the victorious commander shouted into his ear, “Live ! Thou hast vanquished the foe !” These words brought Dmitri back to life, and, looking up, he beheld the radiant faces of his faithful comrades in arms ; when he caught sight of the

Christian standard floating over the Mongol dead, he was so overcome that he embraced the friends who stood around him, kissing even the common soldiers. Although his armour had been broken by the blows showered upon it, he himself had not been wounded, but only stunned, therefore he was soon able to mount his horse and ride across the battlefield.

Dmitri did not pursue the Tatars any further ; perhaps because they were still in great numbers, and to follow them into the Steppes would have been to invite disaster on account of the lack of food. He may also have been influenced by the hope that Mamai had been so weakened that henceforth he would desist from attacking Russia.

The defeated Mongol leader had started off on his return journey to Sarai, intending to gather new forces ; but on the way he was attacked by a rival Khan, Tochtamyish, and on the river Kalka, where a hundred and forty years previously the Tatars had destroyed the first band of Russian princes who had dared to meet them in battle, Mamai was now defeated by his rival. He was soon afterwards killed in the Genoese colony, Kaffa, in the Crimea, whither he had fled for refuge.

The glorious victory on the field of Kulikovo in 1370 was, however, dearly bought, and many were the Russian heroes who there laid down their lives for faith and fatherland. The chronicler reported truly when he wrote, "Great was the joy in Russia, but great was also the mourning for those slain by the forces of Mamai on the Don." The news of the victory spread like wildfire, and all over Russia hearts

were lifted up to God in thanksgiving. It seemed as if the Tatar yoke had at last been definitely cast off, and that Christian blood had not been spilled in vain. Great was the general rejoicing, men congratulated one another on being alive to see so glorious a day, and a grateful people bestowed upon Dmitri the title of "Donskoi"—of the Don.

This campaign was the first real military undertaking organized by the Russians, not against Russians—against kith and kin—but against a common foe. The chronicler thus tersely describes this great event: "By the power of God and by Christian weapons fell the godless Tatars, and God upheld the right hand of the Grand Duke Dmitri Ivanovitch." The victory had far-reaching consequences, and from henceforth the tables were turned. Now the Tatars began to fear the Russians, and in future the Khans tried to keep their hold on Russia no longer by force, but by stealth and treachery.

The hope that the Mongol domination had at last come to an end was, however, not fulfilled, and the Russian people had still much to suffer at the hands of the Tatars. Two years later they again invaded Russia, and besieged Moscow, when unspeakable horrors were perpetrated by these ruthless fiends, who gained entrance to the Kremlin by false pretences. Dmitri was far away from his capital when it fell a prey to the treacherous foe, and on his return he found the charred remains of his city strewn with the corpses of his massacred subjects. Thus writes the chronicler: "How can I describe Moscow, that rich and populous city, so recently teeming with life? All her beauty

vanished in a day; what remained of her former glory but smoke and ashes—the empty walls of sacked and burned-out churches. The blood-soaked earth was covered with the bodies of her slaughtered citizens, and the only sounds that broke the silence hovering over this city of the dead were the groans of the few who had not yet succumbed to the terrible wounds inflicted on them.”

Unfortunately, the unity brought about by Mamai's invasion proved to be but short lived. New feuds broke out amongst the Russian princes, between town and town, and even the high ecclesiastics were at variance, and taking sides with the warring princes. So distressing was it to witness such an anti-climax that, to quote a contemporary, “the soul of Russia was sick at the remembrance of the disillusionment which followed on that great victory.”

Dmitri Donskoi, whose is the honour of having been the first prince to offer organized resistance to the arrogant and overbearing Tatars, was struck down by a sudden illness while still in his prime. When the news of his serious illness reached the ears of the citizens they were sorely distressed, for they dearly loved this gallant and pious prince. Although they did not at first know that his disease was fatal, Dmitri himself was well aware that his end was approaching, and to the faithful boyars, who in silent grief watched by his bedside, the dying hero addressed these words: “To you who witnessed my birth and childhood, to you is my innermost soul known. With you at my side, I have ruled over my people, defeating their enemies and protecting their welfare; together we

have rejoiced in times of prosperity, and together we have grieved when evil days have fallen upon us. I have loved you sincerely, and have rewarded you freely as was your just due. I have never wounded your honour nor touched your possessions. I have been careful not to offend you by a single word, and you have not been treated as boyars, but as princes of the Russian lands. It is now for you to prove by your actions the sincerity of the assurance so often made to me : 'We will die for you and your children.' Therefore give your loyal service to my wife and to my youthful sons, and make their joys and sorrows your own."

The death of this noble prince at the early age of forty, in 1389, cast a deep shadow over the Russian nation. The chronicler writes at great length of the great sorrow of the people, who felt that they had lost a father in Dmitri. He enlarges upon the Grand Duke's eminent powers of leadership, and speaks of his clear mind and his tender, loving heart. Dmitri was beloved for his greatness of soul and his devotion to the fatherland, as well as for his keen sense of justice ; by his thoughtful kindness also he had endeared himself to all who knew him personally. Having been brought up from his earliest childhood amongst rough, unpolished fighting men, and reared in the din of clashing arms, he had never acquired any book-learning ; but his mental powers and the nobility and uprightness of his character fitted him to be a ruler of men, while by his humility he won his way to all hearts.

The chronicler makes but little of Dmitri's political mistakes, several of which might be cited by the

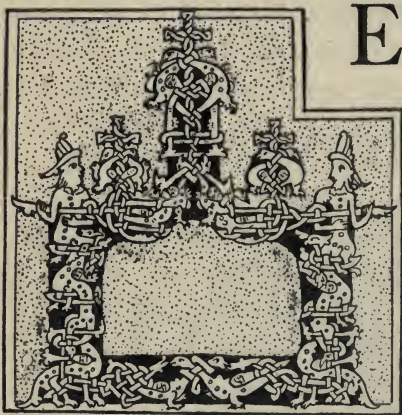
historian, but to the first "defeater of the Tatars" a good deal could be forgiven, even so serious an error of judgment as his absence from Moscow during the siege of that city. Apart from his victory on the field of Kulikovo, which sounded the death knell of Mongol power in Russia, his historic importance lies in the fact that he developed the power of Muscovy, the seeds of which had been planted by his grandfather, Ivan Kalita, and the harvest of which was to be reaped by his great-grandson, Ivan III.



BANNER OF DMITRI DONSKOI, WITH THE IKON OF OUR LORD.

CHAPTER VIII

SERGEI RADONEJSKI, THE "WONDERFUL OLD MAN"



ILLUMINATION FROM A RUSSIAN MS. OF
THE GOSPELS, FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

EVIL, indeed, were the days upon which Rostov had fallen during the first half of the fourteenth century, for that clever schemer, Ivan Kalita (1328–1340), Grand Duke of Moscow, had succeeded in acquiring this lesser principality and in joining it on to his own dominions—a

proceeding bitterly resented by the people of Rostov, who made no secret of their feelings. It was this attitude of independence which had proved their undoing, for the Stadthalter sent to govern them not only ruled them with a rod of iron, but made the resentment of the citizens against Muscovite rule the pretext for a general slaughter of boyars as well as of common people. The Governor's action created a panic, and many families fled to other towns for safety.

To one of these belonged the Boyar Cyril, who,

with his wife and three sons, forsook the place in which his people had dwelt for so many generations, and settled in the humble little town of Radonej. Another reason may have weighed with this boyar in leaving Rostov ; for, owing to a series of reverses, the erstwhile wealthy citizen had become poor, and his pride forbade him to live any longer in his native town under such altered circumstances. By selecting Radonej for his abode, Cyril was the means of bringing fame to that insignificant little township, for his youngest son, Bartholomew, under the name of Sergei Radonejski, was destined to become one of Russia's most popular saints.

Among the many accounts of his life, the most important is that written by his pupil, Ephiphani, and the following facts are based upon the chronicles compiled by this loving and devoted follower of the "Wonderful Old Man," as St. Sergei Radonejski came to be called by his contemporaries. According to the reckoning of those days, this saint was born in the year 6825, counted from the creation of the world, or 1314 A.D. As was evidently the custom for boyars at that time, his parents employed tutors to instruct their children. Their youngest boy attended lessons with his older brothers, Stefan and Peter, but seemed too hopelessly stupid to grasp the intricacies of the Slavonic script. All his efforts to do so only ended in failure, and he was sorely disheartened by the gibes of his brothers ; yet, though apparently unable to assimilate book-learning, he showed a marvellous understanding of the spiritual, and was filled with a great longing for goodness and truth.

One day, so runs the story, the lad was sent by his

father to seek for some horses which had strayed from the pasture. Evidently in those early and more primitive days, life and customs were simpler and more homely, for there seems to have been nothing incongruous in the little son of a noble being entrusted with a task which, in later days, would have fallen to menials. While trying to find the horses, Bartholomew encountered a venerable and saintly-looking old monk, who, struck by the eagerness of his efforts, asked what he was looking for. Having told of his quest, the little lad looked earnestly at the holy man, and said, "Oh, father, there is another thing I am always searching for, and that is how to master book-learning." Whereupon the stranger placed his hands on the lad's head and prayed that God might enable His young servant to learn to read; and then, with words of kindly encouragement, he told Bartholomew that he was to have no fear, but to rest in full assurance that this desire would be granted. Happy in the prospect of the fulfilment of his ardent longing, and his heart overflowing with gratitude, the lad prevailed upon the stranger to come back with him to his parents' home, where the saintly guest was made welcome, and being invited to share in the mid-day meal, he did so, but not until he had offered up prayer in the private chapel of the boyar. From that day onward all Bartholomew's difficulties, as far as his studies were concerned, seemed to vanish.

In those days religious zeal found its expression in monasticism, and those who, for some reason or other, were unable to take the vows, felt that at least they could carry out the monastic rules with regard to

fasting. When Bartholomew was about twelve years old he decided to devote his life to the service of God, and apparently his parents put no obstacles in his way, but permitted him to abstain from all food on Wednesdays and Fridays, and on other days to live merely upon bread and water. In spite of this meagre fare the lad grew up into a tall, strong young man. When eighteen years old he thought that the moment had arrived for him to carry into practice those ideas of a life of devotion to God which had come to him as if by inspiration, but which were very different from those current at that time in the Russian Church. His intention was to go into the wilds, there to spend his time in communion with God.

When, however, he informed his parents of this plan, they asked him to postpone his departure, "for," said they, "we are old and in delicate health; your married brothers think only of their own families, and it is upon you that we rely to tend us in sickness and distress." So Bartholomew, who always put first things first, readily fell in with their wishes, and with tender care did all that he could for the welfare of his aged parents. About two years later, very shortly before their death, they entered one of the monastic establishments into which both sexes were admitted, a common practice in the evil days which followed the Mongol invasion. Because their lives were in perpetual jeopardy the people had begun to think more seriously about death and the life to come, and, according to the prevalent ideas, eternal salvation was assured to those who died as monks or nuns. Therefore, in order to prepare themselves for heaven, large numbers

took monastic vows. Sometimes princes took these vows on their deathbeds, as, for instance, Alexander Nevski.

Freed from family ties, Bartholomew was now able to put his ideal of the religious life into practice. It was no morbid craving for solitude, nor any spirit of antagonism to the society of man, which led him into the wilderness, but a clear and definite perception of what was needed in days when monasticism had degenerated into selfishness, self-indulgence and sloth. Three hundred years earlier, when Christianity was introduced into Russia, the Greek form of monasticism, which did not include community of goods or life in common, was adopted there. Yet, even in those early days, three Russians—Hilarion, Antonius and Theodosius—broke away from Byzantine traditions and founded the famous Cave Monastery in the vicinity of Kiev, where the apostolic principle of "all things in common," coupled with the severe asceticism of the Egyptian anchorites, was lived out. Gradually, however, the Greek practice reasserted itself, and, by Bartholomew's time, only monasteries of the Greek order existed. There were many monastic establishments, but all of them resembled settlements, in which each monk lived in his separate hut. One might be rich, another poor, each looking after and providing for himself. All that they had in common was the vow of strict obedience to the abbot, otherwise they led a purely individualistic existence. All the monasteries were urban, and the capital of every principality contained a monastery. In villages, again, those who were desirous of taking monastic vows built themselves little huts around the church, the priest acting as their spiritual adviser.

Thus, although supposed to be "not of the world," monks still remained "in the world," and came too much under its influence.

All this was a cause of grief and disappointment to the young idealist, who decided to try and live out his own conception of consecrated life—a life of separation from the world and its temptations, led, therefore, far from the dwellings of man. In order to find a suitable place in which to build his cell, Bartholomew wandered away from Radonej, and penetrated deeper and ever deeper into the sombre forest until he finally decided upon a spot near a clear spring of water, some fifty-four versts from Moscow. The next thing to do was to ask Prince Andrei Ivanovitch for permission to make a clearing in the forest where he could build himself a cell and a tiny chapel, and also prepare enough arable land for his support. His request having been granted, Bartholomew returned to the forest, accompanied by a carpenter who helped—and, indeed, taught him—to fell trees and to erect a shelter against rain and snow. A little chapel, also, was built, but, before services could be held in it, it had to be consecrated. For a consideration, the nearest village priest consented to perform this rite, and the chapel was dedicated to the Holy Trinity—the Troitsa.

Bartholomew's idea of a holy life did not necessarily include loneliness, therefore he invited one of his brothers—who on losing his wife had become a monk—to join him. His descriptions of the blessedness of a life spent apart from the world and in communion with God evidently appealed to the imagination of Stefan, who followed the young enthusiast into the

wilderness. Very soon, however, the unaccustomed silence began to pall upon him, and after a while he frankly admitted his inability to lead a hermit's life, and went his way.

Thus, when only twenty years of age, the young saint was left without human companionship—without even the sound of a human voice. But there was music in the air when the storm shook the great trees, or when in spring the birds were singing. The forest teemed with animal life. A pack of wolves would race past his cell, the elk stalk right up to it, the squirrel climb on the roof, the fox would peep through the open door, and the hare play round it. There were bears, too, but they ignored the harmless intruder while they searched for honey in hollow trunks of trees ; the young cubs, gambolling about among the fallen giants of the forest, would every now and then peer curiously in at the lonely man. Beast and bird soon grew accustomed to the tall young man who never tried to harm them, and they in their turn did not molest him.

One day, however, a large bear, unable to resist the temptation, entered in at the open door, and man and beast gazed steadily at one another. The man made the first move, and breaking in two the bread which he was eating, handed one half of it to his furry visitor. This act of hospitality established a friendly relationship between the two, and for a whole year the bear came every day to visit his friend, who never forgot to place some bread on the trunk of a tree quite close to his hut. A sad time came, however, when there was nothing to share, and for two days the bear looked in

vain for his dainty morsel and had to go away surprised and grieved. Still he did not lose heart, but came again on the third day, and this time he was not disappointed, and for a whole year he never missed paying his daily call.

Bartholomew abstained from all food on Wednesdays and Fridays, and for the rest of the week subsisted on water from the spring and on the bread which some kindly peasant deposited at a certain spot. But occasionally this supply failed—hence the disappointment of the bear.

Some months after taking up his abode in the forest, Bartholomew was shriven by the same priest who had consecrated the church, and received the name of Sergei. For some time he continued to live alone, spending his days in meditation and prayer, in reading the Scriptures, clearing the forest, and converting waste land into fertile soil, on which he grew his daily supply of nourishment. It is not to be wondered at that such uninterrupted loneliness should have affected his imagination, and, according to the chronicler, the devil, attended by numerous demons, visited him on more than one occasion. One night, while Sergei was reading the Evening Service by the flicker of a wooden taper, a company of demons, dressed like Lithuanians (who were at that time enemies of Russia), crowded into the tiny chapel, and gnashing their teeth at the lonely watcher, seemed about to tear down the little building, when Sergei lifted up the Cross, and in the name of the Holy Trinity commanded them to depart—which they did.

Two years had passed since the young man had left

his home to live alone with God in the wilderness, and his fame had reached the monks of a certain monastery, several of whom were not satisfied with their mode of living, and were delighted to hear that there was one man brave enough to strike out a new line, which they also believed to be the right one, but which none of them had been strong enough to take up of themselves. Some of these monks sent a deputation to Sergei, asking him to allow them to join him in the wilderness. Their request was readily granted, and for many years this little colony consisted of thirteen men. Although newcomers frequently made their appearance, the number did not increase, as many found the solitude, which was so attractive in theory, impossible to endure for any length of time.

The apostolic number was retained for some time, but suddenly there came a change. Reports of this simple and holy life reached the ears of the Archimandrite of Smolensk, who, forsaking the comforts and luxuries of urban life, and resigning his high position, came to Sergei as a humble suppliant, seeking to be admitted into this brotherhood. Many of the Smolensk monks followed in his train, and thus a large settlement sprang up in the forest. The Archimandrite of Smolensk, a rich man, handed over most of his treasures to Sergei, the actual, though not yet consecrated, Abbot of the community. This money was used to erect a church in place of the tiny chapel, which had served its purpose for many a long year. Sergei's brother also returned, bringing with him his twelve-year-old son, who, some years later, founded another famous monastery.

Stefan's presence, however, soon gave rise to difficulties, for he considered that as his brother had never been consecrated Abbot, he, as the elder of the two, should wield supreme authority. Meek and lowly, and free from all self-seeking, Sergei did not oppose his brother, but matters came to a crisis when one day, during service in church, Stefan loudly upbraided one of the community for speaking of Sergei as the Abbot. Thereupon the gentle Sergei decided that, for the sake of peace, it was better for him to give place to his brother. So, without telling anyone of his decision, he secretly left the settlement and went to the Abbot of a neighbouring monastery, who was a friend of his, and of whom he asked permission to build himself a cell some ten versts further away in the depth of the forest.

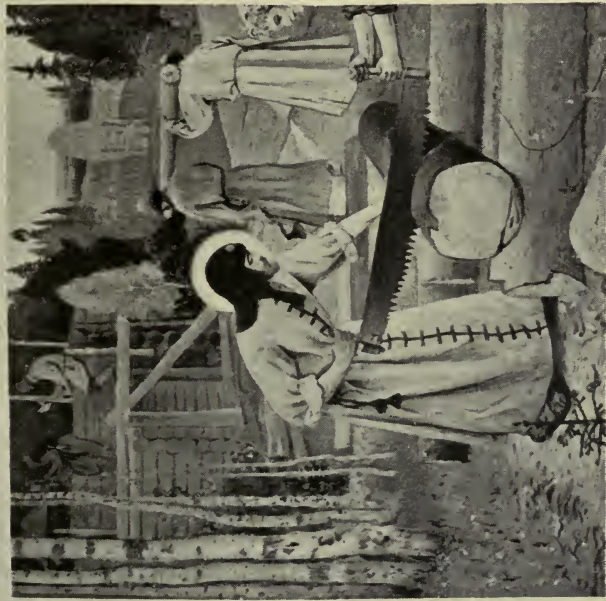
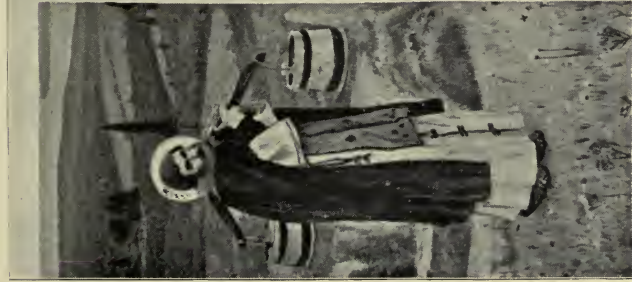
This request was granted, and once again the holy man found himself alone in the wilderness—but not for long. His absence was noticed almost immediately, and, rightly assuming that their beloved master had gone to visit his friend, the monks soon discovered his whereabouts, and having tracked him down, a number of his devoted followers begged of him to allow them to live near him. Thus history repeated itself.

The Metropolitan of Moscow, Alexei, equally great as diplomat, ecclesiastic and statesman, was, for the time being, Regent of Russia on behalf of Dmitri Ivanovitch, the infant grandson of Ivan Kalita. Alexei was personally acquainted with Sergei, whom to know was to love, and he now used his influence to persuade Sergei to return to his bereft community, for Stefan

proved himself far from acceptable, even to those monks who had at one time been his partisans and who had remained with him in Troitsa. Ever humble and tractable, Sergei consented to return and be consecrated Abbot.

The Christlike life of the Abbot of the Troitsa Monastery could not remain secret, and gradually his fame spread all over northern or Muscovite Russia; from far and near people came to visit him, and no one went away disappointed. The sad were comforted, the discontented cheered. Princes, too, who were at variance, brought their quarrels to him for arbitration, and he, as a wise peacemaker, always succeeded in settling the question so as to avoid bloodshed. He upheld the cause of the oppressed and fearlessly rebuked the wrong-doer, but with such wisdom and gentleness that even the most hardened could not withstand him. His monks found him invariably impartial, fair and just, never listening to gossip or slander. Devoid of hypocrisy, of a "boundless humility and adorned with good works," his life was as a shining light in one of the darkest periods of Russian history.

Realizing how unsatisfactory the monastic life was, Sergei, whose ideals in this respect were shared and upheld by the Metropolitan, now decided to introduce the communal system. The Metropolitan and the Abbot, both wise and experienced men, knowing how bitterly such an innovation would be resented by the monks, sought and received the support of the Patriarch of Constantinople, from whom they obtained a letter addressed to Sergei, suggesting the introduction



THE LABOURS OF ST. SERGEI.

From the painting by M. B. Nesterov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

of the Apostolic practice. This suggestion, coming from the Patriarch himself, disarmed opposition, and every member of the Troitsa Monastery handed over his possessions for the benefit of the community. Thus, instead of each man growing vegetables for himself, cooking for himself, and having his own belongings and keeping them for his own use, all was now devoted to the common good.

A refectory was built, and the monks no longer laboured for themselves, but for each other ; and as the saintly Abbot never exacted of others a task which he would not undertake himself, he, too, did his share of boot-mending and working in field and garden.

One day a peasant presented himself at the monastery. He had come from afar to see Sergei, of whose holiness and piety he had heard so much. On his arrival he inquired for the Abbot, and was told that he would find him working in the orchard. The only man he could see digging there, however, was a monk in a tattered habit. Failing to see the Abbot, the peasant turned and repeated his inquiry of some bystanders. From these he found out to his astonishment that the old man in the shabby garb was the great Sergei, whom he had expected to find amid a crowd of priests and attendants, enjoying pomp and dignity. Yet, though disappointed in his expectations, the peasant returned to Troitsa at a later date, to remain there as the follower of the humble Abbot.

The humility of Sergei was manifested in various ways : many a thing too old and bad for the monks, he considered quite good enough for himself. In the early days of the settlement the small band of monks

suffered at times real privations, for he did not permit any of his followers to beg for alms. Thus it came about that, although they were allowed to accept gifts brought to the monastery by devout people, on one occasion he himself was without food for several days. At last, unable to endure starvation any longer, he offered his services as carpenter to a monk whom he knew to possess bread, but to be in need of assistance for the building of a little lean-to to his hut. The Abbot's offer was rather ungraciously accepted, and, after a whole day's work, he received a few mouldy loaves in return for his labour.

As time went on and the fame of Sergei increased, princes and boyars visited him, as well as beggars, the rich gifts of the former being expended on the latter. His gracious hospitality and generosity attracted people from far and wide ; no stranger ever knocked at the portal in vain, and no wayfarer was ever denied shelter. He also revived the ancient practice of organizing relief for the poor and needy, and around his monastery he built almshouses, an orphanage and a hospital. During this period of general insecurity and of frequent recurrences of famine and plague, the misery of the poor was often acute ; but in Sergei they found a friend ever ready to help them in their hour of need. Thus he won the love and veneration of rich and poor alike.

This meek and lowly servant of God firmly believed in the efficacy of prayer, and constantly people would ask him to make intercession for them. So great was the faith of Sergei that in answer to his prayers many sick were healed. In fact, the belief that he was

endowed with supernatural gifts became more and more prevalent, and the numerous incidents quoted by Epiphani in proof of it were, for the most part, verified by the Abbot's disciples, to whom the smallest thing affecting their master was of the keenest interest.

Remembering what a loving and sympathetic nature he had, we are hardly surprised to hear that a bond of telepathy should have united him with his most intimate friends. The biographer records, for example, the following experience: one day, during dinner, the Abbot suddenly rose to his feet, bent his head in silent prayer and then, bowing to some unseen person, said aloud, "Rejoice thou, also, O shepherd of the flock of Christ! And may the peace of God abide with thee." No one for the moment dared to ask Sergei why he had acted in this manner, for the brothers realized that their Abbot had seen a vision; but afterwards, when they reverently approached him on the subject of his strange behaviour, he replied, "At that moment my friend, the Bishop Stefan, of Perm, was passing the monastery, and, bowing to the Holy Trinity, he bestowed his blessing upon us humble folk." Sergei even described the spot where all this had taken place, and some of the monks, anxious to follow it up, ran after and overtook the episcopal party, who confirmed the statement that, at that given place and moment, the Bishop had stopped on his journey, had offered a prayer, and, turning towards the monastery, had exclaimed, "Peace be unto thee, my spiritual brother!"

The monks were deeply impressed, and in commemoration of this event they erected, on the spot

where the incident had occurred, a cross, and, later on, a small chapel. Also, in memory of the vision, it has become a custom in the Troitsa monastery for a bell to be rung during the dinner hour, just before the last course is served, as a signal to the monks to rise while the Abbot says the following prayer: "O Lord, hear, we beseech Thee, the petitions which Thy servants, Sergei and Stefan, are offering up on our behalf."

It is quite natural that, with such a reputation for saintliness, the gentle Sergei should have been credited also with miracle-working, and that even during his lifetime the people should have spoken of him as "that wonderful old man." In spite of his humility, he proved himself a born ruler of men and a successful organizer, but these gifts were exercised with such wisdom, courtesy and understanding of human nature, that he was rarely obliged to assert his authority.

The Metropolitan, Alexei, realizing how great and beneficial would be the influence of Sergei over the whole of Russia were he to follow him in office, decided to appoint him his successor. For this purpose he sent for the Abbot, to whom he presented a golden vestment and cross. Sergei, quite unconscious of what these gifts portended, declined them, saying, "Ever since childhood's days I have abstained from adorning myself with ornaments of gold, and as I began my days, so I mean to end them." The Metropolitan then disclosed his intentions, but the Abbot, overwhelmed with dread at the thought of such a prospect, replied, "Vladyika, promise me not to do this, or else I shall flee into the depths of the forest and hide myself where no man shall find me."

Lust of power, desire for popularity and fame were foreign to this lowly servant of a lowly Master ; yet there were times when he found himself constrained to come forward and take his share in political matters, using his great influence for the benefit of the fatherland. On one of these occasions he sent a letter to Dmitri, Grand Duke of Moscow, urging upon him the necessity of going out to face the Tatar army which was threatening invasion, and it was this letter which led the wavering princes, who had all gathered round Dmitri to discuss the position of affairs, to decide on marching south to the Don, where they won the famous victory of Kulikovo in 1370.

Within the walls of his monastery Sergei was undisputed head, requiring implicit obedience from the members of the community ; yet every rule was enforced by means of gentle persuasion or mild reproof. He desired his monks to devote the time spent in their cells to studying the Word of God or to meditation and prayer, and, in order to be sure that his wishes were carried out, he would sometimes look in through the window of a cell, and if he saw the inmate occupied in the right way, would give a gentle tap on the pane, pronounce a blessing, and pass on. If, on the other hand, he found several of the brothers together in one cell, his tap would be followed by a request that the culprits would come and see him next day at a certain hour. At such an interview the faithful shepherd would try to convince the listeners of the unworthiness of gossip and the unfruitfulness of idle talk.

The hours not devoted to prayer were spent by the

monks in such handiwork as was necessary to provide for the needs of the community and in healthy out-of-door work, such as clearing the forest, working in the fields, orchard or kitchen garden. The wilderness into which the quiet Bartholomew had withdrawn himself fifty-five years previously had completely changed, and had become a fruitful oasis. The redeemed soil of the forest had been transformed into fields and meadows.

People from all parts and of all kinds flocked to the monastery, peasants being especially desirous of living under its protection. Sergei did nothing to prevent this, although he maintained his ideal to the extent of not allowing the world to come too near ; yet, in course of time, a large settlement grew up in the vicinity, and Troitsa became a famous centre, to which visitors of every rank, from the highest to the lowest, gathered, and no one passed it by without enjoying the hospitality of the monastery, or receiving the Abbot's blessing. During Sergei's lifetime the Troitsa Lavra, as it came to be known, did not possess other immovable property than the land which had been cleared and tilled by the monks ; but many gifts were bestowed upon it, which were expended in securing the barest necessities of life for the inmates, in beautifying the large church erected beside the original chapel, and in providing for the poor and needy. After many years the monastery was enriched by gifts of land, villages, fisheries, etc., so that in time it became one of the wealthiest monasteries of the empire. Ever since the days of its founder it held the first place among Russian monasteries—hence its name of Lavra. It was not the only monastic establishment founded by

Sergei ; among several others, he also built one which became the central school for ikon painting. Incongruously enough, the most cherished possession which its church contained was the celebrated ikon of Our Lord, the "ikon not made with hands," as it was called.

In 1391 Sergei died, in his seventy-eighth year, fifty-five years after he had taken up his abode in the sombre forest in his quest for a holy and consecrated life. Deep and widespread was the sorrow when this greatly beloved man "transferred his abode to the other world." In those days his pure, strong and selfless personality shone forth, not with the dazzling glitter of a cold, artificial light, but with the brightness of the sun which radiates warmth as well as light. Just as "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," so it was impossible for him to keep his light concealed, and however far he might penetrate into the forest, it could not but shine to the glory of God.

The Troitsa Lavra formed the nucleus of a network of new monasteries. The experience of Sergei repeated itself, for many of his followers would leave the brotherhood in order to seek solitude in some far away spot, which in its turn would inevitably become the nucleus of a new settlement and religious centre. In this way forty monasteries were founded by followers of Sergei, and, from these forty, fifty more were developed as branch colonies.

Thus was fulfilled the interpretation of the vision in which the saintly Abbot had seen a large flock of birds flying around him, for all over Muscovite Russia his spiritual descendants were carrying on his work.

In 1441, fifty years after his death, Sergei was canonized by the Church, and twenty-two years later a church was built in his honour and dedicated to his name. His biographer, Epiphani, waxes eloquent on the subject of his goodness, kindness and generosity, and, in describing him, enumerates just those virtues which go to the making of a truly Christian character. There is no weakness or sentimentality in this healthy and virile Russian Saint, of whom we may aptly say that he fulfils the qualifications mentioned in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit . . . Blessed are the Meek . . . Blessed are the Pure in Heart . . . Blessed are the Peacemakers."



CLERGY AND LAITY AT MEAL.
From a fourteenth century MS.

CHAPTER IX

IVAN THE TERRIBLE AND THE METROPOLITAN

PHILIP



CHURCH OF VASSILI BLAJENYI,
1555-1560.

MUCH had happened since the days when Dmitri Donskoi had gathered the princes of Russia for the first time round his banner.

No longer were the rulers of Moscow Grand Dukes, but "Rulers of All Russia," with the courtesy title of Tzar;

for, favoured by the Tatar Khans, and supported by the Church, Muscovy had become a great power.

Thus, when the Tatar domination had come to an end, chiefly through internal disintegration, the rulers of Muscovy stepped into the place vacated by the Khans, whose spirit of despotism they adopted as their own.

Although to all appearances Muscovy had become a mighty empire, yet at the beginning of the sixteenth

century Russia was, in her turn, in a state of general disintegration.

Foreign visitors to Russia were deeply impressed by the barbarism of her régime, and Giles Fletcher, the English ambassador, in his exhaustive treatise on the Russian Commonwealth, thus describes the condition in Muscovy, of ruler and ruled :

“The state and forme of their government is plaine tyranicall, as applying all to the behoffe of the prince, and that after a most open and barbarous manner: as may appeare by the sophismata or secretes of their government, as well for the keeping of the nobilitie and commons in an under proportion, and for uneven balance in their severall degrees, as also in their impositions and exactions, wherein they exceede all just measure, without any regard of nobilitie or people.”

The people lived in the midst of such lawlessness, danger and hardship, that progress was impossible, and Fletcher was justified in writing that—

“. . . It makes the people (though otherwise hardened to beare any toile) to give themselves much to idleness and drinking: as passing for no more than from hand to mouth. . . .”

The inhabitants of this vast realm lived, as they had done for centuries, in self-contained communities, having little or no communication with each other or with the central government, whose local representatives held absolute sway over them. Fletcher wrote—

“And for the dukes that are appointed to govern under them, they are but men of titular dignitie,

of no power, authoritie, nor credit, save that which they have out of the office for the time they enjoy it. Which doth purchase them no favour, but rather hatred of the people, for as much as they see that they are set over them, not so much for any care to doo them right and justice, as to keepe them under in a miserable subjection and to take the fliece from them, not once in the yeare (as the owner from his sheepe), but to poule and clip them all the yeare long.”

It mattered very little to the people to whom they paid taxes, whether to the Khan or to the Tzar—the same thing always happened :

“The common people, they are robbed continually both of their harts and money (besides other means), sometimes by pretence of some service to be done for the common defence, sometimes without any shewe at all of any necessity of commonwealth or prince. So that there is no meanes, either for nobilitie or people, to attempt any innovation, so long as the militarie forces of the emperour hold themselves fast and sure unto him and to the present state. Which needes they must doo, beyng of the qualitie of souldiers, and enjoying withall that free libertie of wronging and spoiling of the commons at their pleasure, which is permitted them of purpose, and to make them have a liking of the present state.

“The great oppression over the poore commons, maketh them to have no courage in following their trades: for that the more they have the more danger they are in, not only of their goods but of their lives also. And if they have anything, they conceale it all they can, sometimes conveying it into monasteries, sometimes hiding it under the

ground and in woods, as men are woont to doo where they are in feare of forreine invasion. In so much that many times you shall see them afraid to be knowen to any boiaren or gentleman of such commodities, as they have to sell. . . . Fear made the people servile. . . . This may truly be said of the conditions of the commons and vulgar sort of people, that there is no servant nor bond slave more awed by his maister nor kept downe in a more servile subjection, then the poor people are, and that universally, not only by the Emperour, but by his nobilitie, chief officers and souldiers. So that when a poor mousik meeteth with any of them upon the high way, he must turne himselfe about as not daring to looke him in the face, and fall down with knocking of his head to the very ground. . . .”

The majority of the peasants, living in scattered villages on the outskirts of the sombre forests, were in perpetual jeopardy from raids ; so much so, that on every church tower a look-out was kept, and the moment the watchman observed a cloud of dust in the distance, the alarm-bell was sounded. Whereupon everybody fled into the forest, the men driving the cattle before them. When, therefore, the raiders—whether Tatars or robbers—appeared upon the scene, they found merely the empty shell. If they did burn the houses down—well, there was enough timber close at hand to rebuild them. Such a perpetual struggle for life, such a state of insecurity and of living from hand to mouth, does not tend to elevate, and small wonder that foreigners found the people of Russia “brutish.” There was nothing to raise them—no

education, no strong religious feeling, for their religion was purely formal.

“They serve God with crosses,” wrote Fletcher, “after a crosse and vaine manner, not understanding what the crosse of Christ is, nor the power of it. . . . All this mischief commeth from the clergie, who being ignorant and godless themselues, are very warie to keepe the people likewise in their ignorance and blindness, for their living and bellies sake : partly also from the manner of government settled among them : which the emperours (whom it specially behoveth) list not to haue chaunged by any innovation, but to retaine that religion, that best agreeth with it.”

Russia had no Renaissance, no Reformation, no great spiritual movement to carry the nation out of the darkness of medieval days into the light of knowledge. To the English onlooker who had just experienced the effects of the Reformation in his own country, the reason for this darkness was—

“ignorance of the holy scriptures, which notwithstanding they have in the Polonian tongue (that is all one with theirs, some few wordes excepted), yet fewe of them read them with that godly care which they ought to doo : neither haue they (if they would) bookes sufficient of the Old and New Testament for the common people, but of their leiturgie onely, or booke of common service, whereof there are great numbers. . . . Which notwithstanding it is not to be doubted, but that having the word of God in some sort (though without the ordinarie meanes to attaine to a true sense and understanding of it) God hath also his number among them.”

The marvel is that there were still people, even in that sad country, who were good and true ; and in spite of the sombre colours in which Fletcher depicts conditions in Muscovy, he sees possibilities for the future :

“As may partly appeare by that which a Russe at Mosko said in secret to one of my servants, speaking against their images and other superstitions : That God hath given unto England light to-day, and might give it to-morrow (if he pleased) to them. . . .”

The observant ambassador admits that the stuff of which the Russians were made was good—it was the conditions that needed changing ; for, writes he—

“As touching their behaviour and quality otherwise, they are of reasonable capacities, if they had those means that some other nations have to traine up their wittes in good nurture and learning. . . . For as themselves are verie hardlie and cruellie dealt withall by their chiefe magistrates and other superiours so are they as cruell one against an other, specially over their inferiours and such as are under them. So that the basest and wretchedest Christianoe (as they call him) that stoupeth and croucheth like a dogge to the gentleman, and licketh up the dust that lieth at his feete, is an intollerable tyrant where he hath the advantage. By this meanes the whole countrie is filled with rapine and murder. They make no account of the life of a man. You shall have a man robbed sometime in the very streets of their townes, if hee goe late in the evening, and yet no man to come forth out of his doores to rescue him, though hee heare him crie out. I will not speake of the straungenesse of the murders and other cruelties committed among them, that would

scarsly bee beleevved to bee done among men, specially such as professe themselves Christians."

That ordinary citizens were at least restrained in their dealings with their neighbours was due to fear of punishment, so cruelly meted out, for—

"When any is taken for a matter of crime (as treasor, murder, theft) the manner of examination in such cases is all by torture, as scourging with whips made of sinowes or whitleather as bigge as a mans finger, which giveth a sore lash and entreth into the flesh, or by tying to a spit and roasting at the fire; sometimes by breaking and wresting one of their ribbes with a payre of hote tongues, or cutting the flesh under the nayles, and such like. . . ."

Cruelty and brutality were the order of the day, and in the administration of the criminal law of the sixteenth century, recourse was had to tortures so horrible that they can only be compared to those of the Inquisition.

"Their capitall punishments are hanging, hedding, knocking on the head, drowning, putting under the yse, setting on a stake and such like. But, for the most part, the prisoners that are condemned in summer are kept for the winter, to be knockt on the head and put under the yse."

Not so the nobles—

"for theft and murder upon a poore mousick by one of nobilitie, are (not) lightly punished, nor yet is hee called to any account for it. Their reason is, because they are accounted their kolophey or bondslaves. If by some gentleman souldier, a murder or theft be committed, peradventure he shal be imprisoned at the emperours pleasure. If the

manner of the fact be verie notorious, he is whipped perchance, and this is commonly all the punishment that is inflicted upon them. If a man kill his owne servant, little or nothing is said unto him, for the same reason : because hee is accounted to be his kolophey or bondslave, and so to have right over his verie head. The most is some small mulct to the emperour if the partie be rich : and so the quarell is made rather against the purse then against the injustice. . . .”

In warfare, however, all restraint fell away—the soldiers exhibited that same ferocity which so horrified the world in Ivan the Terrible.

Against such a sombre background the sinister figure of Ivan the Terrible does not appear quite so abnormal as it would have seemed had he lived in more enlightened days. He was, after all, but a product of his time—merely an exaggerated type of the Russian of that period of chaos. His position as Tsar enabled him to dispense with every vestige of restraint, and set him free to follow out every evil impulse and every perverted instinct.

Was it not symbolical of the character of Ivan's reign that the period of his birth was marked by a season of continual thunderstorms ? That at the moment of his birth the darkened sky was illuminated by a lurid light, and, even as he was drawing his first breath, lightning flashed through the heavens, and deafening thunder-claps rent the air ? When the news of the birth of the prince reached the ears of the superstitious Muscovites, they exclaimed in pious submission, “God has sent a chastening rod into our midst !” The fear occasioned at this time by the phenomena of nature was but a

faint foretaste of the terror which was to seize many a brave heart during the reign of that same infant grown to manhood.

After a long and uneventful reign of twenty-eight years, the Tsar Vassili III had died, having appointed his infant son Ivan, a boy only three years old, his successor. The child's mother, Helen, was proclaimed Regent in accordance with the old Slavonic law whereby the widow reigns on behalf of a minor. It was, however, not she, but her lover, Ivan Ovtchina-Telepna-Obolenski, who became the virtual ruler of Russia ; and well matched were these two, who now wielded unlimited power. Ruthless and unrestrained by any scruples, he ruled in her name, committing atrocities such as had hitherto been unheard of in Muscovy, and in all this he was countenanced by the widow Regent.

Under this régime life became unbearable for the boyars, and, driven to extremes, they caused the Regent to be poisoned, while they flung her lover into a dungeon, where he was starved to death.

While the little Tsar was passing through the years of childhood amid the intrigues and cabals of princes and boyars, he received no fit training, and was not seldom neglected altogether, being exposed even to gratuitous suffering at the hands of the new Regent, Prince Ivan Shuiski. The nervous, highly imaginative boy noticed that, although his personal welfare and wishes seemed of no account to the Regent and the Council of the Boyars, yet everything was done ostensibly in his name, and gradually he found the solution to this otherwise inexplicable riddle, in his

official position, in his title of "Ruler of All Russia." He began to brood over the apparent contradictions of his condition, and there was implanted in his heart the seed of hatred against the boyars which was to bring forth terrible fruit in after years.

Shuiski was not left very long in the enjoyment of the influential position of Regent. The Metropolitan whom he had raised to that dignity turned against him and threw all the weight of his position on the side of Prince Byelski, one of the boyars left to languish in prison during Helen's regency. The Metropolitan's intrigue led to Shuiski's deposition, and Byelski's accession to power. He ruled wisely and well, but only two years later was overthrown by Shuiski, who caused his rival to be strangled. The time-serving Metropolitan was in his turn also deposed, and Makarius, a man endowed with great gifts, but utterly lacking in principle, was appointed. He became one of the most famous Metropolitans of Muscovy, and the autocratic power gained through him much of its enormous prestige.

Prince Ivan Shuiski's enjoyment of his position was once more cut short, this time by illness. He handed over the reins of government to his brother Andrew, but the power was soon wrested from his family by Helen's brothers, the Glinskis, to whom the Metropolitan Makarius had transferred his allegiance. Andrew Shuiski fell a victim to the ferocity of the young Tsar Ivan, who had him torn to pieces by a pack of hounds. This outrage may have been suggested by the Tsar's uncles, but was evidently carried out with alacrity by the malicious boy who bore the proud

title of Ruler of All Russia, and who became notorious in the history of mankind as the personification of ferocity, cruelty and lasciviousness.

Can this be wondered at, for was he not the son of a mother whom the people called that "Drinker of Blood"? Had he not her blood running in his veins? And what an example had been set him, first by his mother's lover, and then by his guardian, Prince Shuiski, of whose unbridled selfishness and utter callousness to the feelings of others Ivan complained in a letter written many years later! Was not the very atmosphere of the Kremlin saturated with intrigue and reeking with blood? No good plant could come forth from such soil—what could it produce but a poisonous fungus whose odour was deadly, and in whose vicinity nothing healthy could flourish?

Even during the days of his childhood Ivan delighted in causing suffering, but at that time his victims were limited to young animals, which he would fling to the ground from a balcony and then enjoy watching their agony. Such entertainment, however, soon became tame, and he began to crave for more exciting diversions. Thus, at the age of fifteen, the young Tsar, surrounded by playmates whom he had selected, would ride helter-skelter through a crowd of harmless citizens. Led by Ivan, the cavalcade would ride down the unsuspecting people, and numbers of wounded and dead would mark the track of the future ruler of Russia. No protest was made by his guardian against this barbarous pastime. On the contrary, his uncles and the fulsome flatterers who crowded round him praised him for his boldness. "What a

magnificent horseman!" they exclaimed. "What a brave and bold Tsar he will make!"

Such were the surroundings amid which Ivan passed his youth. No regular occupation was provided for him, but, left entirely to his own devices, he was at liberty to follow every whim which crossed his mind. No one impressed upon him the responsibilities and obligations of his position, and nothing was done to prevent this highly-strung, imaginative and clever boy from giving free rein to his desires and yielding to every impulse. It was as much as a man's life was worth to interrupt the Tsar with business of the State when he happened to be amusing himself. For such imprudence more than one man was strangled at the boy's command.

According to Russian custom, the Tsar had been taught to read, the Bible being the text-book. Unfortunately, the only things that caught his eye and appealed to his imagination were the accounts of such rulers as Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar. They became his heroes and models of kingship, and he looked forward to the time when he, too, would have unlimited power and authority, and astonish the world with his display of might. The young Tsar read many books, historical as well as theological, with the result that his immature mind was full of an undigested mass of facts which, in after life, he drew upon at random when engaged in controversy. Early in life the youthful Ivan had shown signs of devout-mindedness, which, however, in no way acted as a restraint upon his desires, and from his fifteenth to his seventeenth year he spent his time alternately in riotous living with

his wild companions and in frequenting monasteries. In fact, after a while, this habit of visiting monasteries and shrines became an obsession, and only fostered his superstitions.

On reaching his seventeenth year Ivan came of age, but not satisfied with merely taking over the rudder of the State as his forebears had done, he decided to be crowned in solemn and impressive pomp. He was thus the first Russian ruler to have a coronation ceremony; he loved pomp and show, and such an opportunity for display, for magnificent staging and for dazzling the eye of the crowd was too good to be lost.

In the Metropolitan Makarius the young Tsar found a ready supporter of his ambitious claims. After the Coronation, the next matter to be attended to was the Tsar's marriage, and, in accordance with precedent and in order to facilitate his choice of a wife, all the most beautiful girls of noble birth and of a marriageable age were sent to the capital for his inspection. His choice fell on Anastasia Sacharjin-Romanoff; but although Ivan seems to have been greatly attached to his wife, his marriage did not in any way act as a deterrent to his voluptuous desires, and even after his official assumption of power he made no attempt to alter his irresponsible manner of life. In this he was encouraged by his mother's relations, the Glinskis, who had been wielding the actual power and were anxious that this state of affairs, so profitable to themselves, should continue. At the same time other favourites of the Tsar ruled without let or hindrance in various towns and districts, mercilessly exploiting or robbing the inhabitants.

Those of Pskov, driven to despair by the tyranny to

which they had been exposed and hoping to find redress for their wrongs, sent two envoys to the Tsar to plead their cause before him. As ill-luck willed it, the envoys arrived at an unpropitious moment. Ivan was starting out on a hunting expedition, and the interruption so incensed him that he ordered the two unfortunate men to be stripped and held down on the ground, while raw spirits were poured over them, their beards and hair being then set on fire. Just as Ivan was watching this performance, news was brought to him that a church bell had fallen to the ground. To the superstitious people of those days, the Tsar included, such a happening portended disaster, and, leaving his victims to their fate, he galloped away on horseback to see the fallen bell.

The foreboding came true. Soon afterwards a terrible conflagration devastated the city of Moscow, in which at least nineteen hundred adults lost their lives, to say nothing of innumerable children. From the safe distance of his palace on the Sparrow Hills, Ivan callously watched the grandiose spectacle. The misery of his homeless subjects, whose all had fallen a prey to the hungry flames, left him utterly unmoved; the only thing that troubled him was the loss of some of his own buildings, which he instantly gave orders to have re-erected.

The ruined citizens did all they could to discover the origin of the disaster, and the enemies of the powerful Glinskis, taking advantage of this opportunity, assiduously spread the report—which was only too readily believed—that the fire had been brought about by witchcraft. From mouth to mouth the rumour spread :

"Princess Anna Glinski and her family had soaked human hearts in water, and the Princess herself had driven through the streets of Moscow sprinkling that water in all directions, and wherever the water fell, flames burst forth." The result of this rumour was that the exasperated populace broke out into rioting, and seizing any members of that family they could lay their hands on, promptly lynched them. No attempt was made to restrain the people, and when it became known that the Princess Anna had sought shelter at the palace, the crowd moved out towards the Sparrow Hills, clamouring for the surrender of the "witch."

Yet this moment of extreme danger—when autocratic power might have been wielded with advantage—found the Tsar wanting in initiative and devoid of resourcefulness. It was at this crisis that a *deus ex machina* arose. Just when Ivan was trembling in impotent fear, Sylvester, a priest from Novgorod, appeared before him, and cleverly utilizing the Tsar's state of mind, worked on his imagination by depicting the torments of hell which awaited the tyrant as the penalty of sin—torments for which the priest told him there was only one way of escape, namely, genuine repentance. Cowed by the threats administered in such a masterly way, Ivan promised to amend his life. Thereupon Sylvester undertook to rescue the Tsar from the peril which was threatening him at the moment: a few shots from a cannon dispersed the crowd, and the situation was saved. It was never known how the priest came to be at the Tsar's palace at that moment, but it has been suggested that the Metropolitan, who also hailed from Novgorod, had sent him there.

Sylvester's admonitions and threats had the desired effect: "the Tsar came to himself and repented in dust and ashes. It was as though his diseased soul had been cauterized by the fire of fear and thus become healed." Ivan clung to the man who had so miraculously appeared in the hour of need to save him, and practically handed to Sylvester the power which it was his right to wield. Prince Kourbski, the contemporary historian, writes that "in order that the Christian land might have a time of rest, God sent help in the person of a man—Sylvester, who spoke to the Tsar in the name of God."

Poor Russia! it was indeed high time for a change of policy, for "she was beset by enemies without and within, by the lawlessness of the Tsar himself and of his favourites, which was turning the country into a desert and ruining the fatherland." For a period of ten years Muscovy was left in peace by the Tsar, who gave over the reins of government into the clean, capable hands of Sylvester. This priest, assisted by Adashev, a noble and upright youth, whom Kourbski compared to a lily growing upon a dung-heap, reorganized the disordered country. Theirs was no easy task, but, fortunately, the "time-servers" who surrounded Ivan fell in with the new régime, and the virtual Regent was soon able to cleanse the Augean stable.

To aid him in the task of governing, Sylvester formed a council of picked men, nobles and citizens, which did excellent work, and on special occasions he also called a National Council. Two new codes of law were compiled—a civil code, and the Stoglav dealing

with ecclesiastical matters, which were once again in a deplorable state. The sagacious Metropolitan Makarius trimmed his sail to the wind and supported Sylvester, by whom he was always treated with the utmost deference. Sylvester also drew up rules for the regulation of social and domestic life, the "Domostroi," in which, although many of the injunctions with regard to the treatment of children may seem over severe, consideration for slaves and dependants is earnestly recommended.

This lawgiver was, however, as exacting with himself as with others, and he proved the sincerity of his convictions by setting all his slaves free. His honest, generous nature shines out in all his writings, which are in perfect harmony with his moral and blameless life. He used every means in his power to restrain the bloodthirsty tendencies of the Tsar, and to make him realize the beauty of a sober, moral, active and generous life ; but in vain.

Sylvester's ultimate fall was inevitable. The only marvel is that he retained his position of trust for so many years. Friction had already arisen between him and the Tsar, owing to differences of opinion regarding the objective of certain minor military expeditions, and especially the war against Livonia. Ivan desired a maritime outlet, and this campaign was undertaken with that object ; Sylvester, on his part, strongly opposed this enterprise as a war of conquest, and urged the Tsar to concentrate all his efforts in putting an end to the Khanat of the Crimea, as the perpetual inroads of the Tatars were disastrous to Russia. He endeavoured to convince

Ivan that, as long as these birds of prey had their nests in such close proximity to Russia, it was impossible for her chief source of wealth—her fertile plains—to be developed. Sylvester realized the pre-eminent importance of a definite and complete conquest of the Tatars ; for, although no longer in a position to cite Russian princes to come before them, the hordes of the various Khans raided Russia so frequently, and with such success, that she was threatened with depopulation. The Tatars, both of Kazan and of the Crimea, made so many captives year by year that the Levantine and Oriental merchants who visited the slave-markets bought these Russians by droves, like so much cattle. Occasionally these traders would actually take their human wares back into Russia to sell them to their own countrymen, but when purchasers were not forthcoming the unfortunate Russians were carried back into Asia, where there was a great demand for them. There was safety for no man south of Moscow, and at a distance of only 100 versts from that city the fertile lands were but sparsely populated by people who, in this perpetual fight against overwhelming odds, became more Asiatic than European.

The war against the Khan of Kazan, in which the flower of Russian chivalry was engaged, displaying that courage and endurance for which they have always been renowned, ended in the conquest of Kazan. More than 100,000 Russian captives were thus set free, which fact alone ought to have proved to Ivan the urgent need for settling, once for all, the Tatar question.

The strict impartiality of Sylvester's administration aroused the ire of a certain faction of boyars. These men, realizing that the Tsar was beginning to chafe at the restraints imposed upon him, played upon his vanity as autocrat until they brought about the deposition of Sylvester, who had, however, of his own accord previously retired to a monastery. He was not allowed to remain in the retreat of his choice, for at Ivan's command he was sent away to the lonely monastery of Solovietsk in the White Sea, there to be kept prisoner in seclusion.

It is one of the queer inconsistencies of Ivan's character that this despot nearly always sought a pretext for his crimes, so as to give them an appearance of legality, and he was fertile in inventing reasons to justify his actions. Yet surely one who claimed absolute power over the life of his subjects could have spared himself the trouble of making excuses. Thus, for the sake of appearances, a trial was instituted, at which Sylvester was not even permitted to appear, but was condemned for wizardry. Indeed, the boyars so worked upon the superstitions of the Tsar that, when the monarch seemed uncertain whether to let Sylvester appear before him or not, they prevented it, by assuring him that Sylvester's very presence might in itself be a danger, for they had already convinced Ivan that Sylvester's great influence over him had been due to a demoniacal spell.

The consciousness of having been dominated was so galling to the pride of Ivan that his cowardly nature, in revenge for the long restraint put upon it, poured forth its fury upon all those who had been in sympathy

with Sylvester. Adashev, that "angel" of a man, as Kourbski calls him, only escaped being tortured to death by dying of fever during a military expedition in Livonia; had he been in Moscow at the time of Sylvester's fall, his fate would have been unthinkable. Although he escaped torture himself, his family and friends were almost all done to death by various horrible methods. It was as if the flood of Ivan's criminal desires had broken the dykes which Sylvester had built around them. Unrestrained by any guiding hand, the Tsar now followed a definite policy of extirpation of those princely families which, during the reign of his grandfather and father, had added so much to the lustre of the Muscovite court. These princes were in most cases his own kinsmen. Many of them still possessed their ancient appanages, or minor principalities; no longer, however, as independent rulers, but as vassals of Muscovy. Those whom Ivan did not kill, with kith and kin, he deprived of their ancestral domains. In his own writings he admits having confiscated twenty such principalities. One or two of the princes, it is true, were compensated by gifts of land in far distant parts of the empire, where they were, however, completely cut off from all their historic and family traditions.

Small wonder that some boyars, preferring exile to torture and death, managed to escape from prison cell or dungeon and fled to Poland or Lithuania. This "unreasonable behaviour" grieved and incensed the Tsar, who invented a scheme of "financial responsibility" in order to prevent the exodus. He made all the boyars liable for the escape of one of their number.

Thus the flight of Prince Serebryani cost them one and a half million roubles,¹ and that of Prince Mstislavski one million two hundred thousand, the minimum fine being apparently half a million.

During Ivan's reign more than half of the princely boyar families became extinct, for the few whom he spared were forbidden to marry. Thus died out the Prosorovskis, the Oushatis, the Vorotinskis, the Odoyevskis—proud names, all of which are to be found in the "synodic," or memorial list for prayers for the dead drawn up by Ivan. The positions left vacant by the death of boyars he filled with parvenus, and thus a new class of courtiers, or "dvoryane," sprang up. This new nobility was entirely dependent upon the favour of the Tsar, who rewarded them with titles and lands for services rendered.

The only one of those who left his fatherland to seek refuge from certain doom, not being at the moment in prison, was Prince Andrew Kourbski, who afterwards wrote the history of Ivan's reign. This gallant and noble prince sprang from a family which had borne for many generations an unblemished reputation, and whose ancestors had been renowned for their generosity as citizens and their courage as warriors. His father had kept himself apart from all court intrigue, but, like a true patriot, had devoted his whole energies to the services of his country, and, during Ivan's minority, had been one of the chief military leaders. Kourbski himself was a contemporary of the Tsar, and had been in the expedition against Kazan, in which the young Tsar, much against his will, had also taken part. He

¹ 1 rouble = 16s. of that time.

became Ivan's right hand in matters of war, winning his way to favour by his deeds of prowess and by the success of his military undertakings on the eastern frontier. For many years he was Ivan's favourite, and the Tsar, when commanding him to make war against Livonia, wrote—"Thee, my beloved, do I send in my stead."

Kourbski served his master loyally and faithfully until circumstances obliged him to transfer his allegiance to another master. It seems that a reverse suffered by the troops under his command reminded Ivan of the fact that Kourbski had been the friend of Sylvester and Adashev, and, as such, should not be allowed to live. Warned of the danger which threatened him, the gallant warrior had no choice but to flee the country, and, as soon as he had found refuge in Poland, he wrote a letter to Ivan containing such home truths as that tyrant had never heard before. Amongst other things he thus describes the thralldom of the nobles : "Thou hast turned the Russian lands into a prison-house, and free human nature wouldst thou hold captive in thine hand as in an infernal dungeon. Anyone who takes a journey from thy dominion to another is called a traitor, and he who is caught on the frontier is tortured to death." This document is a terrible indictment against Ivan, but every accusation was founded on fact.

The brave servant, Vassili Shibarov, who delivered this letter into the hands of the Tsar, was rewarded for his faithfulness by having his foot pierced through with an iron-spiked stick upon which the Tsar leant heavily, while continuing to read the letter ; Shibarov never flinched, and afterwards, when put to torture, refused to

utter a single word that might injure his master, but praised him with his dying breath.

Had Ivan felt sure of himself and of the righteousness of his cause, he would not have troubled to answer this letter ; but, as it was, to Kourbski's seven and a half pages, he wrote in reply sixty-eight. A correspondence was thus entered into which reflects the grotesqueness of Ivan's mentality, and its lack of balance and proportion. It completely reveals his inherent untruthfulness, for he writes obvious lies in order to excuse himself for certain crimes and acts of cowardice adduced by Kourbski. These letters, penned by Ivan's own hand, reveal the man himself to be all unconsciously both terrible and ridiculous, pitiful and execrable, a deceiver of self, as well as a deliberate deceiver of others. He quotes classics, Holy Scriptures and the Fathers in justification of his obsession—that of wielding unlimited power. He actually cites the case of Shibanov to illustrate his ideal of faithful service, and reproaches Kourbski for not allowing himself to be killed by his master, the Tsar, if such was the monarch's pleasure.

The letters form quite a volume in themselves, and make it clear that all the brilliant feats of war and all the beneficent reforms introduced during the years of Sylvester's influence had been brought about in spite of, and not because of, the wish of Ivan. "I was a slave on a throne," he writes ; "Sylvester and Adashev kept me from all power or authority. They and you boyars not only refused to obey me, but took the law into your own hands, so that I was Tsar only in name." In another letter he does not abuse Kourbski, but writes in the strain of self-accusation ; Kourbski, in his reply

points out that the fugitive is not exactly the right person to act as confessor. "Thou confessest thy sins to me as if I were a priest—I am an ordinary man and a warrior. But there would be joy not only to me, thy erstwhile slave, but to all kings and people if thy repentance were true."

In the year 1564 another crisis occurred in the life of Ivan, who once again desired to free himself from all the influences which surrounded him. He was tired of his advisers and wearied of the high ecclesiastics, who were always interceding on behalf of those whom he had imprisoned or outlawed. He craved for unrestrained licence, and longed to follow his perverse instincts without let or hindrance. All he needed was a pretext for ridding himself of even that semblance of restraint which his official advisers were placing upon him, as well as of the moral restraint of the prelates. In his cunning mind a plan had taken shape, and, with his taste for playing a part, he now staged a drama, the grim humour of which was appreciated only by himself. With a true eye to effect, he paid a round of State visits to all the churches ; not only did he do this, but he gave orders for all the most sacred ikons to be brought to his palace for veneration. Meanwhile, he had everything in his palace packed up, and all the members of his household were told to prepare for a journey. After mystifying everybody and creating an atmosphere of suspense for a whole fortnight, he suddenly left Moscow.

The consternation of the populace, the astonishment of the clergy, and the utter perplexity of the boyars can easily be imagined. For a few days everything was

disorganized, and so general was the stupefaction even among the officials at his unexpected departure, that no one dared even to follow him. The consternation was increased when, a day or two later, two proclamations arrived from the truant monarch, saying that he had decided to abdicate and to commit the government of his realm to "the whole nation." In one of these documents he accused the boyars of treason and the clergy of upholding them. In the second proclamation, which was addressed to the citizens of Moscow, he accused the boyars of having accumulated riches at the cost of the people, and of being "as regardless of the poor as of their Sovereign," thus appealing to the worst instincts of the people, and inflaming them against both nobility and clergy. As to the bishops, "when he, the Tsar, in his righteous anger had meted out punishment to the guilty boyars, the clergy had interceded for these traitors." This proclamation had the desired effect, and the excited populace responded instinctively to Ivan's appeal. They, at any rate, were loyal and true, and would stand by their ill-used ruler, and the cry was carried from mouth to mouth: "The Tsar must not leave his realm, he must not deliver us over to the mercy of these nobles; he must save us from the hand of the oppressors. Let him put to death his secret foes, for life and death are in the hands of God and of the Tsar." The popular indignation was increased by the fear lest Ivan, whom they now considered their sole protector, should forsake them for good.

To save their own lives, the boyars—who saw that by no possibility could they justify or defend themselves—

were obliged to "howl with the wolves," and join in the cry for the Tsar's return. The people not only recalled him with enthusiasm, but offered him their active assistance. "The Tsar has but to point out to us who are his enemies, and we will extirpate them with our own hands." The deputation, headed by the Metropolitan, waited upon the Tsar at Alexandrovo, where, on his way "whither God would lead him," he had broken his journey. The Tsar agreed to consider the request of his people, and, in his reply to them, brought forward many hypocritical excuses for his flight, which he contended had been forced upon him. After some show of reluctance, he at length consented to return to Moscow, accompanied by the deputation of ecclesiastics and nobles, in order to lay before the nation those conditions upon which alone he would agree to resume the reins of government. The man whom the people in their loyal enthusiasm came forward to welcome seemed no longer the same as he who had withdrawn himself from their midst only a fortnight previously. The paroxysm of rage in which Ivan had been indulging had distorted his features, his eyes were sunken and restless, his whole aspect sinister and ferocious, and he had become almost bald. The agony of uncertainty as to how his coup would answer had told upon him to such an extent that he now looked like one who had just passed through a severe nervous crisis.

Once again in his capital, Ivan promulgated his conditions without delay. He laid claim to the right to confiscate property, to banish whom he liked, and to put to death traitors without any interference on the

part of the clergy, who were henceforth to abstain from interceding on behalf of guilty parties. He also put before the assembled council the "New Order for the Empire," which either he or some courtier, anxious to curry favour, had invented. By this ordinance the whole realm was to be divided into two distinct halves, the Zemshtchina and the Opritchnina. Certain towns and districts were to become royal domains, the private property of himself and his sons, this portion to be known as the Opritchnina ; the rest, which was to be called the Zemshtchina, he handed over to the Council of the Boyars. He duplicated every office, whether at court or of administration—in fact, there were to be two Russias—a kingdom divided against itself. From henceforth this monomaniac considered the Zemshtchina as enemy country, and began to treat its inhabitants accordingly. He demanded a heavy tribute of 100,000 roubles from the Zemshtchina for the building of the palace in Alexandrovo Sloboda, where he intended establishing his new court.

His immediate entourage was selected by the Tsar himself from amongst the riff-raff of society, and formed into his bodyguard—the Opritchniki. These Opritchniki, of whom there were one thousand to begin with, but whose numbers soon increased to six thousand, had to swear an oath of fealty to the Tsar. They also had to swear that they would love him more than father and mother, that they would denounce their own kith and kin if found to be plotting against him ; that they would be constantly on the look out for treason, and report it immediately when discovered to the Tsar. Just as the drunkard sees rats in his

delirium, so did the Tsar see traitors on every side, and in his attempt to brush them out of his path he deprived a number of the most innocent people of their lives.

To eat and drink with any of the Zemshtchina people was a crime, but to do them every hurt, to plunder them, even to murder them, was not only permissible but praiseworthy. Indeed, the worse the Opritchniki behaved, the more they found favour with the tyrant. The Tsar's ferocious bodyguard behaved as if they were in an enemy's country. To them was given unlimited power to root out and destroy the Tsar's imaginary enemies. No one was safe, least of all the boyars of Moscow and other rich men, all of whom were exposed to hourly danger. Before long, twelve thousand boyar families were rendered homeless, and forced to become wanderers on the face of the earth. Woe betide anyone who gave shelter to one of these outlaws, and should a tender-hearted peasant offer an asylum to some boyarynia in her hour of travail, he paid for his humanity with his life.

If an Opritchnik coveted anything, he had only to invent an accusation in order to have its owner brought before the Tsar. Sometimes a man was accused of theft, and of course the stolen goods were found on his premises, having been surreptitiously placed there previously by his accuser. The Tsar's familiars wore a special garb, their symbol of office being a dog's head and broom, signifying that it was their duty to protect the Tsar, to show their teeth to his enemies, and with the broom to sweep away every traitor. Chief among the Opritchniki were Malyuta Skouratov, Basmanov and

Afonass Vyezemski. So terrible was the influence of the Opritchniki upon the land, that Kourbski writes: "Satan himself could not have invented a more successful plan for ruining mankind."

Within the walls of his castle at Alexandrovo Sloboda, Ivan instituted a new mode of life. In fact, he turned his palace into a pseudo-monastic establishment, of which he was the mock Abbot, three hundred of his followers having to don monks' habits. Life was strictly regulated by the imperial Abbot, who demanded implicit obedience to his rules. If anyone was not in his place in church at 4 a.m. he was condemned to fast for a week. From 4 to 7 a.m. service was celebrated by priests, and apparently the most devout worshipper was the Tsar himself, who repeated "Lord, have mercy" with great fervour, while his prostrations during service were executed with such vigour and frequency that hard lumps developed on his forehead. At eight o'clock Matins were sung, and then followed a sumptuous repast, during which the Tsar read aloud the Lives of the Saints to the members of this devil's brotherhood. When the meal was over, the good things that remained were taken to the beggars who regularly gathered in the palace yard.

The real business of the day could now begin. Accompanied by some choice brethren—among them always Malyuta Skouratov—who carried long knives under habits which they wore over their costly garments, Ivan now proceeded to the torture-chamber, where innocent men and women were assembled for their doom. At times as many as one hundred victims would await the Imperial inquisitor, whole families

being brought into the blood-stained chamber, where they were surrounded by instruments of torture.

The Tsar sat in judgement, accusing men and women, old and young, of the most improbable offences and unheard-of treason. No protestations of innocence were of any avail. Ever new methods of death emanated from the fertile brain of this master in the art of torture, who invariably added mental anguish to physical suffering. So appalling were his methods of torture that the reader of contemporary chronicles and records feels sick, and the pen of the writer is unable, from reasons of humanity and decency, to mention more than a few of the mildest.

Thus, mothers had to witness their young children flung into a furnace ; parents had to stand helplessly by while their fair daughters were hung up by their legs, and then cut asunder ; a wife was forced to look on while molten tin was poured down her husband's throat ; an impaled son had his mother tickled to death before his eyes, and so on. Such tortures as these were gloated over by Ivan, who commended the skill of those who carried out his hideous commands. Nothing pleased him better than to sneer at the impotent anguish of his victims as they lay grovelling for mercy at his feet, while nothing aroused him to such a pitch of fury as to be confronted with unflinching courage. In contrast with such fiendish depravity, it is indeed inspiring to find that there were not only men, but women, who, in spite of the horrors which they knew awaited them, went proudly, with uplifted head, to meet their doom.

Having satisfied his bloodthirsty appetite for the day,

the Tsar returned to his castle, attended Evensong, and then retired to his chamber, where, stretched on a luxurious couch, he would be lulled to sleep with fairy tales related to him by blind beggars, or enjoy the unwilling society of some abducted boyaryinia, for the carrying out of religious observances interfered as little with his breaches of the seventh commandment as with his "execution of justice." Many a beautiful lady was brought to him, and, having satisfied his lust, he passed the unhappy creatures on to his followers. Death alone put an end to the sufferings of these victims of unbridled lasciviousness. It fared ill with the husband who had the temerity to complain, and more than one had the naked and violated body of his dead wife hung up over his dinner-table, being forced to eat his meals for days in its company, or had it hung up before his door as a warning of the fate which awaited anyone who presumed to withhold aught from the tyrant.

In the torture-chamber, reeking with blood, Ivan gave full rein to his histrionic talent. For instance, there was the case of a former master of the horse, to whom the Tsar had taken a dislike. Accompanied by his wife, the old man was led into Ivan's presence and accused of having plotted to make himself Tsar in Ivan's place. Having listened with apparent reasonableness to the protestations of innocence of the aged couple, the monarch proceeded to enact a devilish farce. "Thou didst aspire to my throne—to be Tsar. Well let it be so!" By his orders, the Opritchniki put royal robes upon the helpless man and placed a crown upon his head, and then the Tsar, kneeling down before his petrified victim, bowed himself to the

ground and addressed him in mock humility as "My Lord." Suddenly, quick as lightning, he struck his knife into the old man's heart.

Ivan never forgave an imagined slight, and even the most casual student of his career cannot fail to recognize that, in his bloodthirsty nature, the ferocity of the tiger was coupled with the playful cruelty of the cat. He hardly ever struck immediately, but permitted those against whom he bore a grudge to live in a state of false security, into which he himself had lulled them by signs of apparent favour. Then, at the moment when it was least expected, he would pounce upon his victim.

There is an appalling monotony in the enumeration of murders and death sentences in Prince Kourbski's *History of the Reign of Ivan*. The only variety lies in the method of torture reported by this writer, or quoted by him as having been seen by such eye-witnesses as two Livonians, Taube and Kruse, who, having been taken captive in Livonia, had entered the service of the Tsar. Perhaps the most revolting case, in its refinement of cruelty, was that of the murder of the Tsar's own cousin, Prince Vladimir Andreievitch, together with his wife and children. This cousin had incurred his displeasure many years previously when Ivan, having fallen suddenly ill, demanded of Vladimir and the boyars the recognition of his infant son as heir to the throne. Adashev's father, as spokesman for the boyars, boldly objected to this plan, as another regency would be fatal to the welfare of the country. Finally, Vladimir himself, whom the boyars desired to appoint as Ivan's successor, signed a document promising to

elect and support the little prince. Ivan, however, recovered from his illness, and for a time kept his cousin under close supervision, and deprived him of his hereditary estates. Gradually the restraint was relaxed, for Vladimir proved himself a loyal and faithful servant of his Imperial cousin, on whose behalf he successfully combated external foes, thereby adding considerably to Muscovy's glory. To all appearances he was enjoying the favour of the Tsar, who was always showering presents upon him. The suspicious Ivan, however, had never forgiven Vladimir for his reluctance in signing that document, and was merely biding his time of revenge. He had successfully lulled his victim into false security, and therefore when his cousin, who was carrying on the duties of his office in Nijni-Novgorod, received an invitation from the Tsar to come with his family and pay him a visit at Alexandrovo Sloboda, he accepted it with delight. He was all unconscious that treachery had been at work, that his cook had been bribed to inform some of Ivan's servants that he had intended sending a present of poisoned fish to the Tsar.

Vladimir and his family arrived one evening, with their retinue, at the palace. According to the two Germans, who mentioned all these details in a letter to the last Grand-master of the Livonian Order of "Sword-bearers," the ducal party received a flattering reception, although they were not called into the presence of the Tsar that night. In the morning, when walking in the palace square, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by a company of armed men led by Malyuta Skouratov. The accusation of having

attempted to poison the Tsar came upon the unsuspecting people like a bolt from the blue. Not as honoured guests but as terrified suppliants the unhappy family was now brought into the presence of the Tsar, who received them in his own sumptuous private apartments. Vladimir's weeping wife and daughters, protesting his innocence in piteous tones, prostrated themselves before Ivan, imploring him to have mercy on their husband and father ; but all in vain. Comfortably seated in his chair, the Tsar thoroughly enjoyed witnessing the abject misery of his relations, who, in proof of their sincerity, offered to take the veil for life if he would only believe in the innocence of Vladimir. Ivan listened to their pleading for a while with stony indifference, then, suddenly turning to his cousin, shouted, "Thou didst seek to take from me my life and my crown ; thou didst deliberately prepare poison for me, now drink of it yourselves." Thereupon the doomed party were made to sit round a table while a cup of poison was handed to each one by the Tsar himself.

Prince Vladimir at first refused to take it, saying, "I am prepared to die, but not by my own hand ; that I cannot—will not do ; let them kill me !" His wife, however, looking bravely and lovingly into his face, said, "My friend, thou art indeed being slain not by thyself, but by him who gave thee the poison ; and if one must needs die, is it not better to do so at the hand of the Tsar than at that of the hangman ? This foul crime will surely be avenged at the great Judgment Day." Whereupon the Prince, committing his soul to God, drained the deadly cup. His wife and

children followed his example, and fifteen minutes later their dead bodies lay on the floor before the eyes of their murderer.

Not content with this, Ivan now called in the boyarynias and women-servants who had come in his cousins' train and bade them gaze upon the dead bodies of their unfortunate master and his family. What a spectacle ! The magnificent surroundings of the Tsar, seated in gorgeous robes in his luxurious chair, pointing out to a group of horror-stricken women the stiffening corpses lying stretched out on the rich oriental carpet. "See how I punish evil-doers !" he exclaimed. "You, too, deserve death ; yet if you beg for mercy I will spare you !" Speechless with horror and amazement, at first they could do nothing but stare at the forms of the innocent victims ; but suddenly a full realization of the crime burst upon them, and, with a sublime disregard of their own safety, they cried as with one voice, "We do not want thy mercy, thou bloodthirsty murderer of our dear lord. We would far rather die, that we may accuse thee ceaselessly before God until the Judgment Day. We will have none of thy mercy, neither do we care to live on earth under thy tyrannous power. Therefore do thy worst !" Enraged at being called a murderer to his face, and that by women, the ferocious Tsar now gave orders that they were to be stripped and hounded through the streets, then shot, and their corpses, after being hacked to pieces, thrown to the dogs.

Still unsatisfied with his revenge, Ivan now poured the vials of his wrath upon Vladimir's mother, his

uncle's widow, who had been forced by him to take the veil many years previously, at the time when her son had been put under surveillance. Now she, too, was no longer to be allowed to live, and the official records of those days testify to the fact that this noble nun was flung down from a height into the river and drowned.

To obtain a correct impression of the terror of this period, one must realize that such cases as those cited above could be multiplied a hundredfold. Foreign diplomatists and merchants who visited Muscovy at the time have left records of their sojourn in that hitherto little known country, which convey such a picture of the "Tormentor" as makes one shiver.

Since 1553 commercial and political relations with England had been entered into, and Ivan had granted extensive privileges to English merchants. Accredited envoys were sent from one country to the other, and the reports of such men as Sir Jerome Bowles, Jenkinson and Horsey, supply valuable and authentic information of the life and customs of barbaric Muscovy, and of its terrible ruler. All agree as to the abject poverty and utter helplessness of the people, and the dazzling splendour of the Court, which blazed with gold and jewels. They had, however, to be very careful what they wrote, for Ivan was extremely suspicious, and strongly objected to any criticism of his realm. On one occasion he justified himself for his coldness to the late ambassador on the ground that in some luggage were found "many letters wherein was written much against our princely estate ;" that "in our empire were many unlawful things done,"

whereat he was much grieved. What would he have felt had he been able to read the following lines written by Turbervile, secretary of the ambassador Randolfe?—

“Good faith, I see thee muse at what I tell thee now,
But true it is—no choice, but all at princes’ pleasure bow.
. . . In such a savage soil where laws do beare no sway
But all is at the King his will, to save or else to slay—
And that sans cause, God wot, if so his minde be such,—
But what meane I with kings to deale?
. . . Conceive the rest yourself and deem what lives they lead
Where lust is law and subjects live continually in dread.
. . . In summe, I say, I never saw a prince that so did rage.”

No wonder that when Ivan offered Queen Elizabeth an asylum from any foes she might happen to have at any time, she coolly declined, and that, in response to his request to be offered a refuge in England should his boyars turn against him, he merely gained permission to settle in England, where he would have to live at his own expense—if he so desired. In the grim tragedy of Ivan’s reign, the only streak of pure comedy (if one may believe the story) is the fancy that took him to marry the virgin Queen of England, to whom he writes: “Beloved Sister!” signing himself “Loving Brother.” This union was suggested to him by a Dutch adventurer, Bomelius, astrologer and quack, who made the Queen out to be young and pretty. Indeed, the idea was so attractive to Ivan that he never quite gave up the hope of marrying an English wife.

Although he treated the boyars as bitter enemies, he could neither dispense with their services on the field of battle, nor with their counsel on political matters

when, as was generally the case, he desired to rid himself of personal responsibility. For, almost all the while that he was terrorizing his nobles, many of these selfsame "traitors" were leading his armies against his external foes north, south, east and west. They fought against Tatars and Swedes, Poles, Lithuanians, and German knights, for the history of Ivan's reign is one of continual warfare. While he was amusing himself with pastimes worthy of a Nero, his boyars, Shtchenatyev and Vorotyinski, Adashev, Kourbski and many others, were winning glory for the Russian arms and adding new countries to the Tsar's dominions.

The records of these days give one the impression of much political activity and of a perpetual coming and going of envoys and ambassadors from all parts—from Poland and Lithuania, from Sweden and Livonia, from Georgia and the Crimea, from Austria, and even from Rome. The Tsar is thus described when receiving foreign Embassies: "He usually wears on his head a small skullcap, and a crown of gold studded with precious jewels and adorned with a cross. His coat is of gold cloth and red velvet, bespangled with big pearls. It has a border, and so have the sleeves, embroidered with beautiful jewels. He wears a high collar decorated with pearls and other jewels. On his chest he wears a beautiful gold cross (two fingers broad and one span long). On his fingers he wears many large rings; his boots, too, are gloriously embroidered with pearls."

His unsuccessful war against Poland, and the sore plight in which he found himself in consequence, forced Ivan to implore the Pope's mediation. Stefan Bathory's

generous and humane offer to decide the issue by a duel had been refused by the cowardly Tsar. With the Pope's Legate he held long conversations on theological topics, one of his favourite pastimes. Polemics greatly interested the tyrant, who often talked with Lutheran clergy, for he was perfectly tolerant towards all creeds, and no one was persecuted by him for religious convictions.

After his famous *coup d'état*, Ivan "reigned by himself," as he expressed it in his letter to Kourbski, thereby proving that this period of terror was a reign after his own heart. The position of the clergy had become exceedingly invidious. They were restrained from interceding for the boyars, only the Metropolitan Makarius making occasional very tentative suggestions for leniency, but he was too diplomatic to incur the Tsar's wrath seriously. His successor, Athanasius, anxious at first to please Ivan, followed the example of his famous predecessor, but soon resigned his position, unable to reconcile his conscience with the existence of the Opritchnina.

Once again the inconsistency of Ivan's character and the incongruity of his actions asserted itself. Torn by conflicting desires, he stretched out unconsciously towards those who were truly Christian and good, and whose faith and religious zeal were genuine, and not, like his own, a mere mockery. Still, it is a question whether his show of religion was entirely mockery and pretence, and was not rather fear of the wrath to come—the Tsar of Russia being afraid of the Tsar of Heaven, and therefore anxious to propitiate Him in order to escape the torments of hell, which his

conscience may have told him he so richly deserved. His life was alternately signalized by acts of sin and repentance, of lust and fear.

His next choice of a Metropolitan fell upon the Archbishop of Kazan, Herman, a venerable old man of blameless life, renowned for his piety and zeal and for his successful evangelization of the Mohammedan Tatars of Kazan. The new Metropolitan was very loth to accept the dignity, but being both honest and brave, though he did not directly reprove the Tsar for his sins, he made bold to speak to him of repentance and of the truly Christian life. Ivan chafed under this plain speaking and resented even such indirect criticism, and the irritation only increased when his subservient friend Basmanov called attention to the fact that the Metropolitan spoke very much as Sylvester had done. It was, indeed, this remark which decided the deposition of the old man, who, by order of the Tsar, was banished from the Capital. Soon after he died—or, was he killed?

There were many ambitious bishops—among others, the Bishop of Novgorod—who were quite willing to combine the duties incumbent upon the shepherd of Christ's flock with an attitude of amiable compliance towards the Tsar. Yet these were passed over, and it is curious to note that it was when Ivan's life was one hideous nightmare of brutality and hypocrisy that he selected as Metropolitan, first such a good man as the Archbishop of Kazan, and then as his successor the man most renowned all over Russia for his saintliness—Philip, Abbot of the Solovietsk Monastery.

All the years in which Ivan had been employed in

destroying and pulling down, this man had spent in building up and developing not only the spiritual but also the material and civic life of the inhabitants of the most northern parts of Russia. From the famous monastery on the island of Solovka in the White Sea, this born ruler of men and brilliant organizer spread civilization over all the lands under his spiritual jurisdiction. The monastery, founded in 1429 on an uninhabited island, had become one of the richest and most important in Russia, boyars and other citizens of Novgorod having from time to time liberally endowed it with property on the mainland.

Philip, whose secular name was Feodor, was born in 1507, his father, the boyar Stefan Kolyetchev, occupying at the time a high position at the Court of the Tsar Vassili III. Feodor had been a playmate of the young Tsar Ivan, and, so it is reported, was much beloved by him. The young boyar became a gallant warrior, and even took an active part in the administration of the country ; but to one of such lofty and pure character the worldly life, as it was then, had no lasting attractions. Therefore, when thirty years of age, he decided to dedicate his life to the service of God, and with this intent he left the capital with all its pomp and luxury, behind him, and wandered some 1,500 versts on foot through the endless forest and bog-land of northern Russia, until he reached the Solovietsk Monastery. There he, the one-time courtier and warrior, was shriven, receiving the name of Philip, and, living as a humble monk, endeared himself to all the brethren by his great piety and charm of personality. Ten years later he became Abbot, having been chosen for this honour by

his predecessor. It was a blessed day for the people of Solovietsk when Philip became their head, and for twenty years he exercised his great administrative qualities for the benefit of the community.

The monastery was situated some 400 versts from the spot where the town of Archangel stands. The Solovietsk domain included six islands, dotted all over with lakes, the three chief ones alone containing no less than 300, some several miles long. These apparently useless islands were turned to excellent account by the practical Abbot, who had many of the lakes linked together by canals, and others drained. By his order the marshland was converted into meadow-land, stony ground covered with earth, and poor soil enriched with manure. Thus was all the waste land reclaimed and made into fruitful fields. He imported cattle as well as reindeer, taught the peasants how to increase their stock by systematic breeding, and created new industries, such as brick-making, salt-evaporating and the tanning of hides. It was absolutely necessary for the community to be entirely self-supporting and independent of the outer world, since from October to May all communication from the mainland was cut off.

This monastery was always held in favour by Ivan, who frequently sent presents to it, among them a church bell and several cannon, with ammunition, for protection against Swedish raiders. He also favoured it by remitting taxation on the salt, which was sold in all parts of the country, and which was the principal source of income to the people of Solovietsk. This last privilege was granted at the Abbot's request. Philip further provided for the needs of the people

by building churches, hospitals and hostels ; for, during the summer months, large numbers of pilgrims found their way to the monastery, the renown of which had spread all over the empire. He introduced not merely material but also civic and moral benefits : he organized local self-government amongst the peasantry, teaching them the blessings of order, labour and thrift, and doing his utmost to make all those under his jurisdiction moral, sober and diligent. His sanctified common-sense, great intellectual powers, and fine sense of legality, had made the wise and energetic Abbot a valuable member of the ecclesiastical Council which, under the auspices of Sylvester, had tried to reorganize the Church. This was the man whom Ivan now selected to fill the post of Metropolitan.

When the order to appear before the Tsar reached Philip, he had not even an inkling of what it portended. On arriving at the capital, however, he found out what was in store for him, and his upright soul revolted at the very idea of it. At first he categorically refused to fill such a position while the Opritchnina existed ; but he was urged by the Council of Bishops to reconsider his decision, for at that time he was the most acceptable candidate to all parties. The bishops also tried to persuade him to ignore the Tsar's behaviour, but to this he replied, "Do not let yourselves be influenced by the fact that the boyars keep silent, they are tied by material considerations ; but we, who have thrown off the shackles of the world so that we may be free to serve the truth, we are bound to give our lives for the flock. If we fail in this, we shall deserve to suffer the pains of hell." The bold words of Philip

annoyed many of the Council, but, anxious to please the Tsar, they nevertheless expressed their willingness to elect him.

In an interview with Ivan, Philip promised to accede to his demand on condition that he dissolved the Opritchniki, and that the extermination of the boyars was put an end to. Philip did not mince matters with the Tsar, but told him plainly that his deeds were not pleasing to God, and that "the Lord himself hath said, 'A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.' Upon actions such as these," he added, "I cannot and will not bestow my blessing!" The Tsar, anxious to excuse himself, replied, "Vladyika, there are many who have risen up against me and who seek to devour me!" "Nay," said the Abbot; "believe me, no man meditates evil against thee. The eye of God is over all. From our fathers we have received the law to honour the Tsar. Give thou the people a good example by thy righteous deeds. Believe me, sin is thrusting thee into fiery Gehenna; Christ our Lord, the Vladyika of us all, has commanded to love God and our neighbour; therein is the law!" This angered Ivan, who now no longer requested but ordered Philip to let himself be elected Metropolitan, to which command the intrepid Abbot responded with the following words: "Even should I be made Metropolitan by force, I foresee that it will not be for long, but if the Opritchniki were dismissed, and the land reunited as it was before, all would be well." What an effect this firm attitude had upon the Tyrant, who had never before been opposed so calmly and boldly, can well be imagined. Things seemed to have come to

a deadlock till at last Philip consented to be made Metropolitan, hoping that at least the holding of such a position would enable him to act as a restraint upon the Tsar. Indeed, for a time it did seem as if he were going to succeed ; for Ivan's career of crime was arrested for the moment and men began to breathe more freely.

Like a searchlight which appears but for a few moments on the midnight sky, so does the personality of the Metropolitan light up the darkness of Ivan's reign, making that darkness appear still more dark. Not for long, however, did this respite last ; the storm soon broke out afresh. Once again Ivan gave full rein to his lust for torture and bloodshed ; whereupon the Metropolitan took him apart privately and expostulated with him, but in vain. A new tragedy began to be staged, and for a time all eyes were turned upon the two strong men who were measuring their strength the one against the other ; the one clothed in the white robe of innocence and righteousness, the other in the sullied garment of lust and power. A conflict between them was inevitable, and its issue was a foregone conclusion.

As a faithful shepherd, Philip felt himself compelled to intercede on behalf of those boyars who had been practically outlawed by the Tsar. On one such occasion, when Ivan had been justifying his actions by reiterating his contention that he was surrounded by traitors and therefore deserved the Metropolitan's blessing and support, and Philip was endeavouring to point out to him the groundlessness of his suspicions, Ivan shouted "Hush ! be quiet, I tell you !" to which

the Metropolitan calmly answered, "My silence would lead thee into sin and the nation to destruction. I must speak even at the risk of arousing thy displeasure, for the Lord has commanded us to lay down our lives for the brethren." "Don't contradict Our Majesty," screamed the irate Tsar, "lest in my fury I fall upon thee. Why dost thou not resign thine office?" To this Philip replied with dignity: "This honour was not of my seeking, and well thou knowest that I have used neither influence nor money to obtain it; but if thou desirest to act contrary to the law, do so, and, so far as I am concerned, the day which brings my career to a close will find me ready."

As all private admonitions had proved fruitless, the Metropolitan now decided to remonstrate with the Tsar in public. One day Ivan, accompanied by the Opritchniki, entered the cathedral and, approaching the officiating Metropolitan, asked him for his blessing. Philip, however, went on with the service, apparently quite unconscious of the Tsar's presence. A second and a third request for blessing were as steadily ignored as the first. Thereupon, one of the Opritchniki called out, "Holy Vladyika! it is the Tsar himself who is craving thy blessing!" It was then only that the Metropolitan looked the Tsar in the face and, in a stern voice, addressed him thus: "Whom dost thou think to please by this masquerading? Thou shouldst fear God and respect the royal purple. Never since the sun first shone in the heavens has such a thing been seen, that a ruler should so dishonour his own royalty. How long wilt thou continue to spill the blood of thine own loyal people? How long is such unrighteousness to

reign supreme in the Russian lands? The very heathen have laws and rights, only Russia has none. Everywhere else those in authority are generally merciful, even towards the guilty, but in our country there is no pity even for the innocent and the just. Remember, that although God has placed thee on a throne, thou art but mortal; he will require at thy hand the innocent blood that thou hast shed. If the people do not raise their voice, the very stones will cry out against thee, and I at least must tell thee this, even if I die for it." Choking with rage, the Tsar banged the floor with his stick, crying out hoarsely, "I have been far too pious; now, however, O Metropolitan, I will give thee, thy clergy and the Empire something to complain of!"

The next night, when all were asleep, the Opritchniki, forcing their way into the houses of the boyars, dragged the wives from their husbands' sides and brought the unfortunate women into the open square, where the Tsar, after keeping several back for himself, handed over the others to his creatures. This night attack was the signal for a general butchery. The next day the Tsar, accompanied by his inhuman followers, rode forth to extirpate the boyars, and for five weeks hell was let loose—no woman was safe from death, violation and shame, over which Ivan gloated with fiendish delight.

Having glutted himself with blood, Ivan again attended the cathedral. The Metropolitan, seeing that one of the Opritchniki had kept his cap on, asked the Tsar to order his followers to show at least outward respect to the sacred place. Quick as lightning,

the culprit snatched off his cap, therefore when Ivan looked round and saw that every head was bared, he accused the Metropolitan of merely seeking a pretence to humble him. Barely two years had elapsed since Philip had accepted the high dignity thrust upon him, and already his career was drawing to an end. The Tsar as usual sought a pretext for the illegal act he was meditating and, instead of merely killing his inconvenient accuser, planned to humiliate the noble prelate by dragging him through the mire of calumny. Never should it be said that Philip had been deposed for fearlessly and faithfully upholding the right. No, he was to be disgraced and deposed for crimes he had never committed. The Tsar found ready tools for the carrying out of his scheme in zealous, time-serving ecclesiastics. There were, amongst others, the Bishop of Novgorod who coveted Philip's position, the Bishop of Suzdal and the father-confessor of the Tsar. The Tsar sent a few of them to Solovietsk where, by means of promises and threats, the abbot who had succeeded Philip, and ten aged monks, were prevailed upon to bear witness to misappropriation of funds and other illegalities supposed to have been committed by Philip during his career as abbot. The unsuspecting Metropolitan was suddenly cited to appear before the Tsar, whom he found surrounded by bishops. Accused of these crimes, he replied with all the calm dignity of one whose conscience is absolutely clear, addressing Ivan in these words: "O Tsar and Grand Duke, thinkest thou that I am afraid to die for a just cause? I shall not waste words in justifying myself. I have spent thirty years in Solovietsk honestly, soberly and

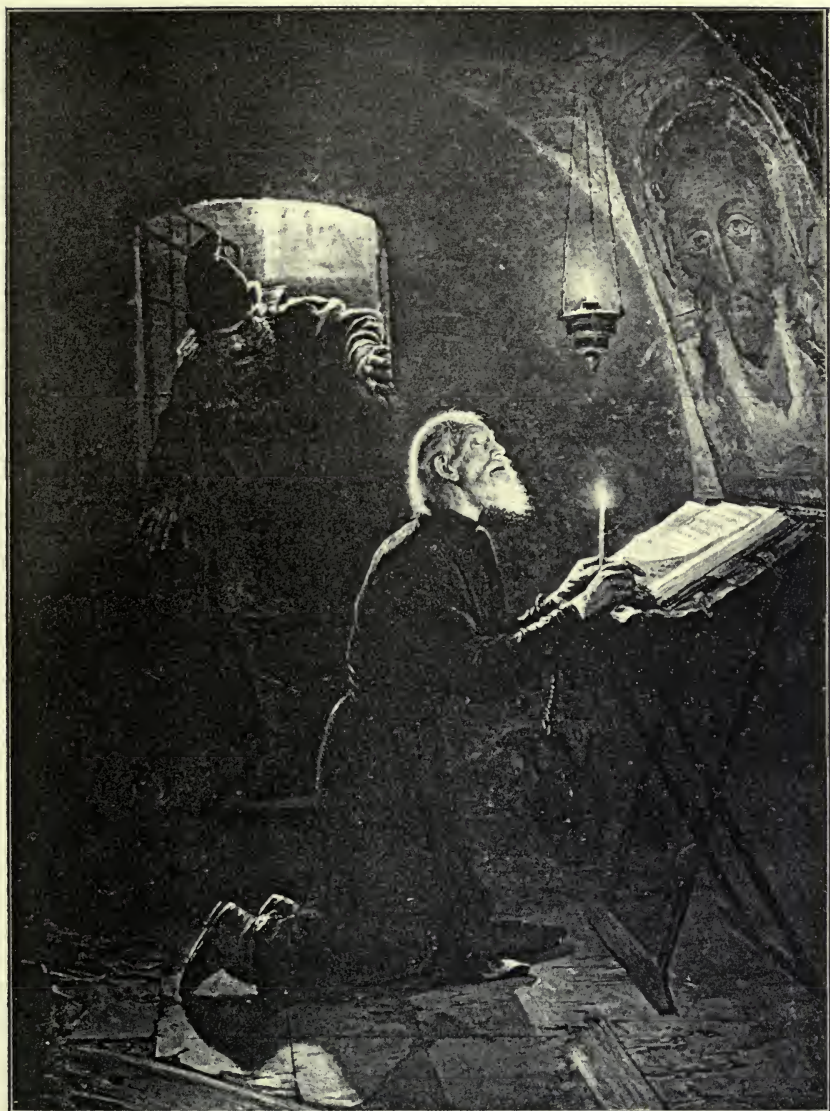
righteously, and no one can convict me of unfaithfulness or vice. I commit my soul unto God who gave it, and who will be thy Judge. I would fain leave an unsullied memory behind me, and therefore would rather die a martyr's death than have it said that I preferred life under such a rule of evil. Do to me what thou wilt : take from me my robes of office," and then, turning to the bishops, he added : "My spiritual brethren, feed the sheep for which you are responsible to God and fear not him who can hurt the body, but only Him who can destroy the soul !" Even as he was speaking, he divested himself of mitre and cope, and then walked quietly out of the room.

That Philip should have the last word and make a dignified departure did not please the Tsar, who called him back and with a ferocious scowl said mockingly : "Thou thinkest thus cunningly to escape trial, but thou shalt not be permitted to be thine own judge, thou shalt be judged and condemned by others. Re-vest thyself, put on thy mitre and cope, and on St. Michael's Day thou shalt once more officiate in the cathedral." In silence the noble old man did as he was bidden.

St. Michael's Day arrived, and when the Metropolitan, robed in his sacerdotal vestments, was in the act of celebrating Mass, some Opritchniki suddenly rushed in, and falling upon him, tore the vestments from off his back, flung around him a ragged monk's habit, and led him out of the cathedral. He was then chained and driven away in a common sledge, the very traces which it left in the snow being swept away by the brooms of the Opritchniki. On reaching

his destination, he was flung into a cell, the first intention being to let him die there of starvation ; but, after two days, the order came to transfer him to a monastery at Tver where he was kept in solitary confinement. Some time later he was smothered by Malyuta Skouratov, by order of the Tsar. Thus did Philip die a martyr's death, and Ivan breathed more freely now that there was no John the Baptist to make him uncomfortable.

This last restraining influence removed, the Tsar gave himself up more than ever to licentiousness and crime. It no longer satisfied him to torture and kill individuals or even entire families—whole towns were to become material for his sport. He now rode forth to make war upon his own subjects—on the citizens of Tver, Novgorod and Pskov, and this, not for any wrong they had themselves committed, but as revenge for the independent attitude of the proud republics towards his remote ancestors in days gone by. Novgorod was the principal victim of this retrospective revenge, but *en route* thither his chastening hand fell upon Tver whose princes had withstood Dmitri Donskoi two hundred years earlier. The first in this city to suffer were the high ecclesiastics ; the Opritchniki ransacked their houses as well as monasteries and churches and then rode away. The frightened citizens heaved a sigh of relief and thanked God that they, at least, had been spared, but some hours later the Tsar's bodyguard returned and pillaged all the houses, flinging the furniture into the streets and setting fire to it. No lives were taken, however, and for that mercy the people felt grateful, but hardly had



THE LAST MOMENTS OF THE METROPOLITAN PHILIP.
From the painting by N. Novoskoltsev.

they brought themselves to this philosophical state of mind when once more the human bloodhounds reappeared, this time to massacre the unfortunate citizens. Having finished their work in Tver, the cavalcade of death-bringers rode on to Novgorod. There such a wholesale massacre was perpetrated that the streets ran with blood, and the river Volkhof, its waters dyed red, was dammed up with corpses. Sixty thousand loyal citizens were thus done to death in Novgorod, amongst them Bishop Pimen, Philip's principal accuser.

In an incredibly short time the news of these doings reached Pskov, the inhabitants of which realized that their turn would come next. Conscious that no escape was possible, they prepared their souls for death, and the first sound which met the ear of Ivan as he neared the city was the ringing of the church bells, calling the doomed citizens to prayer. This pleased the Tyrant, for he guessed what the tolling of the bells implied. As he rode into the city, his vanity and pride of power were flattered by the humble, abject attitude of the crowd which knelt in supplication before him ; but who can account for the Tsar's whims ? Some say that an idiot came up and handed him a piece of raw meat, and as these unfortunates were considered sacred in those days, the Tsar deigned to answer him, saying : " I am a good Christian, and therefore do not eat meat on fast days," to which the idiot replied : " Thou dost worse, for thou devourest human flesh." Whatever may have been the cause, it pleased Ivan to spare these people who had already tasted of the bitterness of death.

After Philip's death, Ivan reigned another eighteen years, and ever darker grew the shadows which lay upon Russia. There were wars without and disorders within. The lawlessness of the Opritchniki had corrupted the rest of the population. Knights and peasants, deprived of house and home by their oppressors, had gathered themselves together and formed robber bands, finding their only place of security in the dark forests.

Ivan's wars were unsuccessful, and both the Polish King and the Khan of the Crimea sent him taunting, humiliating letters which wounded his vanity. They called him a coward and a hangman; for when the hordes of the Crimean Tatars invaded Russia and attacked his capital, "the Emperor fled from the field and many of his people were carried away by the Crimme Tatars—to wit, all young people. . . ." The Zemshtchina boyars, who alone were left to defend Moscow, were unable to do so. The city was set on fire by the Tatars, and from that palace on the Sparrow Hills from which Ivan had witnessed the first great conflagration, the Tatar Khan now watched the sea of flames as its waves rose heavenwards, turning night into day. One of the foreigners then in Moscow, thus describes this catastrophe—

"They set fire on all sides, so that it seemed a burning globe: then did arise so fierce and violent a wind, that it drove the rafters and long trees from the suburbs into the city. The conflagration was so sudden, that no one had time to save himself, but in that place where he was then. The persons that were burned in this fire were above two hundred thousand,

which did happen because the houses were all of wood ; and the streets paved with great fir trees, set close together, which being oily and resinous, made the incendiary inexpressible ; so that in a few hours the city and suburbs were wholly consumed. Many lords and gentlemen were stifled in the caves where they had retired, because their houses being made of great trees, when they fell, crushed down all that was underneath ; others being consumed to ashes, stopped all the exits so that for want of air the people all perished. The poor country people that had saved themselves in the city with their cattle, from three-score miles round about, seeing the conflagration, ran all into the market-place, which was not paved with wood with the rest ; nevertheless, they were all roasted there, in such sort that the tallest man seemed but a child, so much had the fire contracted their limbs, and this by reason of the great houses that were round about ; a thing more hideous and frightful than any could imagine. In many places of the market, the bodies were piled one upon another, to the height of half a pike ; which put me into a wonderful admiration, being not able to understand how it was possible they should be so heaped together. This wonderful conflagration caused all the fortifications of the town wall to fall, and all the ordnance that were upon it to burst. The walls were made of brick, according to the ancient way of building, without either fortifications or ditches. Many that had saved themselves amidst the walls, were nevertheless roasted ; amongst them many Italians and Walloons of my acquaintance."

According to official records 80,000 lives were

lost, and it took two months to clear the ground of corpses. The only buildings which remained standing were those enclosed within the walls of the Kremlin. There is evidently, however, something of the phoenix about Moscow, for every time it has been burned down it has risen from its ashes with fresh vigour and beauty.

“What with the Crimée on the one side and with his cruelties on the other, we have but few people left,” wrote Richard Chancellor after this event—a very different judgment from his former one, for when this first Englishman to visit Russia recorded his earlier impressions, they were very favourable to its ruler.

All the Tsar did was witnessed by the foreign ambassadors, and the Lithuanian envoys were struck by the grotesque side of Ivan's character quite as much as by its terribleness. It is from them that we get the description of his entry into Moscow on horseback, with a bow slung across his back, a dog's head dangling from his horse's neck, and beside him his fool riding on a bullock. The buffoonery of Ivan took a variety of forms : for instance, he dubbed a baptised Tatar, Prince Simeon Bekbulatovitch, “Tsar of all Russia,” retaining for himself merely the dignity of Grand Duke of Muscovy. For nine months his puppet sat upon the throne of Muscovy while Ivan amused himself by cringing before him in humility, and writing petitions to Tsar Simeon. Even foreign ambassadors were expected to appear before the sham Tsar, but the Oriental envoys refused to do so. [At the same time an Austrian embassy was received by Ivan in person in order not to let them think that he had fully abdicated ;

but they saw him in Mosjaisk and not in Moscow.] Ivan made good use of his puppet, allowing all the onus of what amounted to confiscation of Church property to fall upon him.

“Towards the end of the yeere, hee caused this newe king to call in all charters graunted to bishoprickes and monasteries, which they had enjoyed manie hundred yeeres before—which were all cancelled. This done (as in dislike of the fact and of the misgovernment of the new king) hee resumed his scepter, and so was content (as in favour to the church and religious men) that they should renew their charters and take them of himselfe: reserving and annexing to the crowne so much of their lands as himselfe thought good. By this practise hee wrung from the bishoprickes and monasteries (besides the landes which he annexed to the crowne) an huge masse of money. From some 40, from some 50, from others hundred thousande roubles. And this aswell for the increase of his treasurie, as to abate the ill opinion of his harde government, by a shewe of woorse in an other man. Wherein his strange spirite is to bee noted: that beyng hated of his subjects (as himselfe knew welinough) yet would venture such a practise, to set another in his saddle, that might have ridde away with his horse while himselfe walked by the foote.”

When wearied of this farce Ivan thrust his puppet back into oblivion. He had achieved his purpose. To quote again Giles Fletcher—

“All tending to this end—to robbe their people and to inrich their treasurie. To this purpose this byword was used by the late emperour Ivan Vasilowich: That

his people were like to his beard ; the oftener shaven, the thicker it would grow. Or like sheepe, that must needes be shorne once a yeere at the least, to keepe them from being overladen with their wooll."

Ivan invented ever new means of extortion, even to the verge of the absurd ; for instance, to quote the English Ambassador—

"He sent to a certain city to provide him a colpack or cap full of live fleas for a medicine. They returned answer that the thing was impossible and if they could get them yet they could not measure them for leaping out. Whereupon he prayed or beat out of their skinnies 7,000 roubles for a mulcet. . . . This may seem a strange kind of extortion, by such pleasant cavils to flies his poor subjects in good sadness ; but that it agreeth with the qualities of these Emperours and the miserable subjection of that poore countrie."

The fact that Ivan had reached the stage in which whole towns had to be destroyed to satisfy his cravings, did not preclude him from inventing ever new tortures for individuals. No one was safe, for he spared neither age nor sex, nor was the most influential position or even the closest tie of love or kinship, any protection. He now proceeded to vent his rage upon those who had witnessed against Philip. Indeed, Church dignitaries, righteous and unrighteous alike, were especially made to suffer at this period. A characteristic epitaph was that inscribed on the tomb of the Abbot of the Peshtcherski Monastery : "By means of his spike, the earthly Tsar sent him to the Heavenly Tsar"—this being a euphemistic description of that prelate's murder at the hands of Ivan.

One may well ask how it was that no one rose up to depose such a ruler. The more one studies the history of the time, the clearer it becomes that the quiescence of the people was due to the peculiar social and psychological conditions of those days. The boyars were well aware that they were no longer indispensable to the ruler of Muscovy, as they had been during the period of its development. With the exception of Kourbski, who, from his place of voluntary exile, poured forth his pent-up feelings in letters to the autocrat, none of them ventured to oppose him or to make any effort to stem the tide of his wrath—they all resigned themselves to the inevitable. Richard Chancellor, in his attempt to explain the inexplicable attitude of servitude adopted by the whole nation, suggests the following solution : “I compare them to a young horse that knoweth not its strength, whom a little child ruleth and guideth with a bridle for all his great strength ; for if he did, neither childe nor man could rule him . . . thus, if they knew their strength, no one man were able to make match with them.”

We know the fate which overtook those who dared to criticize the Tsar, and therefore cannot but admire the brave boyar who, it is recorded, called out, one day at dinner, when Ivan had evidently been suggesting some new form of frightfulness : “Not only dost thou drink blood thyself, but thou also constrainest us to mingle blood with our meat.” The iron spike quickly silenced him for ever. Again, it is refreshing to read of the presence of mind and disregard of consequences displayed by a rich mer-

chant of Novgorod named Feodor Semenov in the face of torture. This man had been let down by a rope into the river in order to extort from him the hiding-place of his treasure, and when drawn up again he was asked by Ivan, "What did you see under the water?" Semenov replied boldly: "Gracious Lord, I saw gathered together as many devils as Lake Ilmen, Lake Ladoga, the Baltic Sea and the river Volkhof contain, and they intend to rob thee of thy soul and to carry it to the uttermost depths of hell!" The result of this taunt was that the merchant was placed with his legs in boiling water until he confessed where he had hidden his treasure.

If it seemed strange that the populace of Moscow apparently showed no resentment at the Tsar's treatment of the boyars, it is still more surprising to note that no outcry was made when thousands of humble citizens were slain, as was the case at Novgorod. The Russian people, however, had for centuries been learning in the school of suffering to submit to the apparently inevitable, and to bear hardships and misery in silence. They had learned their lesson only too well; and so, when it pleased their ruler to exercise autocratic power, their only feeling was one of gratitude that his heavy hand did not fall upon them personally. The policy adopted by rich and poor alike was to keep as quiet as possible and to pretend poverty so as to avoid attracting his attention. As to the clergy, they did all in their power to appease the tyrant. For instance, when it pleased him to marry for the fourth time, the ecclesiastical law was specially altered, in order to render the act legal.

The Tsar put a liberal interpretation on their decision and indulged in three more marriages ; but the fate of his wives was by no means enviable.

Each marriage was usually accompanied by a complete change of entourage and the murder of the relations of the preceding wife. Wives of whom he tired were either sent to convents or simply despatched to another world, as was the case with the fifth wife, who was drowned on the day after her wedding on suspicion of having once cared for someone else. Of the pond into which she was thrown, an English eye-witness wrote : "It was full of huge overgrown peeks, carps, and other fishes." Many such victims were drowned in it, and if one may believe eye-witnesses, "the fish were much relished at His Majesty's table."

The climax of Ivan's homicidal career was reached when in a fit of fury he struck his own son with his iron-spiked stick. Too late he realized what he had done—while every remedy was being applied, the distracted father crouched on the floor trying to staunch the awful flow of blood. But in vain—human skill could no more avail to save the Tsarevitch's life than the remorse and utter despair of the father could rid his soul of the terrible crime. Five days after the fatal blow, his heir died.

Now to his cup of blood and lust was added a new ingredient, the wormwood of remorse. Haunted by the spectre of his murdered son, Ivan decided to forsake the world and seek refuge within the precincts of a monastery. He told the boyars that he intended abdicating in favour of his son Feodor, a weak-

mindful youth. They, however, fearing lest this was only a new trap, pleaded with him to remain on the throne at least until the war with Poland was concluded. Ivan consented, but tried to find some relief for his tortured conscience by sending rich gifts to pay for prayers offered up for the souls of his victims. Solovietsk received 500 roubles for prayers for the soul of his murdered son, and two years later 200 roubles more. At the same time all those whom he had slain came to his remembrance and, by way of atoning for what he had done—or was it rather with the idea of bribing heaven?—he made a list of their names which he sent to various monasteries. In these “synodics” or obituary lists, are enumerated the names of those whom he had either killed with his own hand or had caused to be tortured to death. Among them are even the souls of the ten monks who had betrayed Philip, and the 753 people of Novgorod, “done to death by Malyuta Skouratov.” Some of these lists, which contained hundreds and even thousands of names, ended abruptly with the remark, “Thou, Lord, knowest them all.” One can hardly wonder at the Tsar’s failing to register all the names of, for instance, the 60,000 victims of Novgorod, but it is striking that Philip’s name appears nowhere.

Ivan also sent money to the monasteries for distribution amongst the poor, and still larger sums of money to pay for “oil for God”—for the lamps in the sanctuaries. Did he really imagine that he could buy the favour of the Almighty with such gifts as fifty roubles for distribution amongst the poor—when it lay within



IVAN THE TERRIBLE.

From the painting by V. M. Vaznetsov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

his power to make a whole people happy by merely abstaining from crime? He had, however, never grasped even that most elementary principle of religion—"mercy, not sacrifice."

As might be expected, the period of remorse soon came to an end, and after the brief lull the storm of carnage broke out afresh and with intensified vigour. Ivan now introduced into his torture the variety of publicity, and in the square of the Kremlin were erected eighteen gallows and many instruments of torture by means of which 300 victims were to be put to death. The citizens fled in terror and shut themselves up in their houses, much to the disgust of Ivan, who sent round heralds to reassure the people. "Come out!" they cried, "Come out! and fear no evil!" To the trembling crowd which now assembled, Ivan put the question: "Am I not right to put traitors to the torture?" What could they answer? The instinct of self-preservation inspired the shout that followed: "Hail to thee, O Tsar! May they meet with the punishment they deserve!" Into the whole nation had been instilled the belief that "all the Tsar's orders must be done, for here the rule is '*Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas.*' They must all say that all he does and says is well and good and that his will is the will of God."

Two years after his son's murder, Ivan fell seriously ill; foreign doctors were called in whose efforts to relieve him availed but little—a malignant disease was consuming a body already weakened by excesses. Ivan did not want to die, and therefore not only the powers of heaven but also of hell were to be moved on his

behalf. Prayers for his life were offered in all the churches, and a famous magician was fetched all the way from Lapland, but the honest old wizard merely predicted the day of his death.

Whenever Ivan experienced a little relief from the almost constant pain, his relaxation consisted in plunging his hands into a heap of precious stones and running them through his fingers. He loved to study their qualities and the influence on the spiritual nature of man which superstition ascribed to them, in the hope of finding some occult antidote for the spell which he was convinced had been cast upon him. His moods varied according to his physical condition, hope and despair alternately swaying him. When he felt hopeless he prayed himself, and, with a request that they would pray for his restoration to health, released prisoners, gave alms to the poor, sent presents of food to the prisoners of war, even promising to set them free. It seems, however, that there was no one—whether Russian or foreigner—ready to comply with his request, for one and all “hated him in whom nothing was human but his outward resemblance.” Thus, instead of praying for his life to be prolonged, they did the contrary and prayed that “God would remove from the face of the earth and destroy this horrible monster and beast, this hellish fiend and ferocious tyrant.” This was the prayer of young and old.

When he was more at ease, Ivan showed himself as ferocious as ever, but only to relapse, when the pain suddenly seized him again, into a maudlin state of hypocritical repentance.

Once on waking up from a protracted swoon, Ivan told his son Feodor that he had been suffering torture in some horrible dark place. Whereupon, his son ordered fresh prayers to be read for his agonized father ; but only a feint was made of obeying this command, for "no one had pity on the Tsar, all desired his death, and the sooner the better. The old people trusted that it would bring them deliverance, and the children that it would bring back to them their parents—everybody hoped for better days." The Tsar's belief in the actual existence of those demons which he had seen depicted on ikons, and the dread of falling into their hands, caused him to send still more money for prayers to be said for the souls of his victims. Did the memory of their sufferings begin to haunt him ? Did he see in his delirium of remorse dogs waiting to fling themselves upon him to devour him as they had flung themselves on so many of the clergy, who, sewn up in bear-skins, had been thrown amongst them to be torn limb from limb ? Or did his imagination experience the agony of being flayed alive or scratched to death by iron claws ? Did his nerves quiver under the sensation of being roasted or boiled alive ? That he anticipated some such treatment at the hands of the inexorable demons, is evident from his frantic efforts to escape their clutches. He was willing to do anything to placate the Higher Powers, and clung desperately to the hope that, if all else failed, his being shriven at the last moment would serve as a passport into heaven.

This, however, was not to be. One day, feeling a little more at ease after a hot bath, the dying Tsar, wrapped in a white satin kaftan and reclining on a

couch, began to play a game of chess, when suddenly he fell back. Death had checkmated him ! The foreign doctors instantly applied restoratives, but in vain. Hastily the priests were summoned, but all they could now do was to shrive the lifeless form of Ivan. What could be more appropriate in such a case than the prayer of the office appointed by the Church to be read over those who were to be prepared for death : "The night of death, gloomy and moonless, hath overtaken me, still unprepared, sending me forth on that long and dreadful journey !"

A painter seeking to sum up on one canvas a typical representation of the crime-stained life of Ivan the Terrible, might well paint it thus—The towers of the Kremlin silhouetted against a midnight sky by the lurid light of Moscow in flames. Below, his body clothed in the sombre garb of a monk, sits the Tsar, his head decked with a crown of gold glittering with gems. He sits on a costly throne, leaning forward, his hands resting upon his knees, with blood dropping from his fingers. His attitude is that of one who is watching something intently. Before him on gorgeous oriental carpets lie mutilated bodies of bishops and boyars, nuns and fair ladies, youths and maidens, and even infants in arms, over all of whom the Tsar is evidently gloating. Most prominent amongst his victims is the lifeless form of his own son. Ivan's lips are parted in a grin of ferocious delight, but in his eyes there is the haunting expression of terror and remorse. On the opposite side of the picture stands the Metropolitan Philip, his robe of dazzling white contrasting with the

midnight sky, and above his head the martyr's crown shimmering like a star. His eyes blazing with righteous indignation, he points with accusing finger at the heaped-up dead whose innocent blood sends up from the ground a faint red vapour that envelops the Tsar ; Ivan's black figure is thrown into relief by the red light from the flames of his burning Capital. Truly a study in black and red !



THE TSAR IVAN RECEIVING VISITORS.

CHAPTER X

HOW YERMAK CONQUERED SIBERIA



RUSSIANS CARRYING BUNDLES OF
SABLE SKINS, 1576.

OWING to the sombre, almost impenetrable forests and the vast impassable marshes which separated them from the rest of Europe, the people of Russia in the sixteenth century were as completely hidden from view as though they were enclosed within the

walls of an enchanted castle, and lived their lives very much in the way their ancestors had done hundreds of years earlier. And they were cut off by forest and marsh not only from their neighbours of alien blood, but also from one another, so that, had it not been for the network of rivers which formed a means of communication, there would have been no intercourse amongst them of any kind—certainly no possibilities of trading. But the “providence of God” was watching over the people, “for

that much of the country being so farre in-land, as that some part a thousand miles and more away from any sea, yet it is served with fair Rivers and that in very great number, that emptying themselves one into another, runne all into the sea." So wrote an English Ambassador, who also saw God's providence in "the wealth of furry animals," which, he contended, were a "naturall remedie against the climate of that country in winter, for," says he: "it would breede a frost in a man to look abroad at that time." Commerce already played a great rôle in the life of the Russians, and the raw products of their vast and fertile country were exchanged for the merchandise of East and West.

The wares exhibited for sale at the markets visited by foreign traders, in the time of Ivan the Terrible, were just the same as those which had been used for barter in prehistoric days, and the reports of the English merchants of the "Russia Company" confirm the tales of the Arab traders of the ninth century. An advance in civilization could be traced in the character of imports, for which there was a constantly increasing demand in Russia, while exports changed little from century to century. The backwoodsman still collected honey and wax, the husbandman still grew corn, flax, and hemp, and prepared hides and tallow, and the trappers still found ample employment in catching wild animals for their skins. The rich people of other countries, though not exposed to such extremes of cold, loved to trim their robes with the costly furs of Russia, for which there was always a ready market: ermine, sable, black, red and white

fox, marten, and dun-fox, wolverine and squirrel were much in demand all over Europe.

Up to the time of Ivan III the principal trading centre of Russia had been Novgorod, "the chiefest and greatest Marté Towne of all Russia," which had joined the Hanseatic League, and the "Deutsche Hof" was as conspicuous in this wealthy and important city as in London. Swedes and Poles, Lithuanians and Germans visited the various towns to which the natural wealth of Russia was carried from all parts. Kiev, after being sacked by the Tatars, had lost its commercial importance, but the northern Republics, Novgorod and Pskov, increased in influence and territory until Ivan III and Vassili III conquered the free cities and incorporated their possessions, which included all Northern Russia, into Muscovy. The people of Novgorod, always hardy and enterprising, had explored the far North-east in search of furs. As they went they crossed forest, swamp and frozen bog, forming here and there settlements, which developed later into towns and colonies, such as Vologda, Kholmogori and Vyatka. Even on the shores of the White Sea they built monasteries and forts, and from Fort St. Nicholas they penetrated still further to the North-west, where they came into close touch with the Lapps, from whom they obtained white bear-skins, frozen fish and fish oil. Daunted by nothing these venturesome Novgorodians fearlessly navigated the great rivers Dwina and Petchora, where they fished for salmon, and trapped the sea-cow, the tusks of which were much in demand. On one of these adventurous expeditions along the Petchora

river, they came upon a range of mountains—the first they had ever seen, and they always spoke of them afterwards as “Zemnoi Poyas” or Girdle of the World, which was their translation of the word *Ural*. Right up to the Arctic Ocean this mountain range extends, its steep cliffs rising sheer out of the river—its “ridges and mountain-tops, by reason of continuall winds are in a manner utterly barren without grass or fruits. Further south they are covered with forests of cedar trees, the home of the best and blackest kind of sable.”

It was both difficult and dangerous to traverse these mountains, which the English writer supposes to be the “Hyperboreas” mentioned by Greek writers, because, as he says, “they are covered with continuall snow and frost, they cannot without great difficultie be travayled and reach so farre into the north that they make the unknown land of Engrón Land.” Some of the Novgorodian traders, however, had succeeded in discovering what lay on the other side of the Ural Mountains; leaving the Petchora behind them, they had boldly launched out into the Arctic Ocean in their river boats, and, circumnavigating the rugged cliffs, eventually arrived at the estuary of the river Ob, up which they sailed until they reached the river Irtish. Marvellous were the tales these travellers brought back with them to Russia—of a people who went to sleep from St. George’s Day in November until St. George’s Day in April, “just like frogges.” “Before falling asleep, however,” it was reported, “they deposited their wares in an appointed place, to which traders of other tribes would

come and exchange for them their own goods, but should the sleepers find on awaking that the exchange had not been what they considered a fair one, bloody strife ensued. The country the Novgorodians passed through they called Yugoria, and most of its inhabitants Ugons, but some tribes they named "*Samoyeds*," or self-eaters, believing them to be cannibals; and these they found shy and difficult to trade with. The Russian traders soon became aware that the land lying to the east and south of the Ural range was rich in gold and silver and in rare furs, and it was not long before they began to look upon this "Sable-land," or "Golden Ground," as they also called it, as their El Dorado.

Moreover in the course of their trading expeditions, these Novgorodians came in touch with many Finnish tribes such as the Votyaks, Voguls, Permyaks and Petchorians, all of whom they designated "erring Tchuds"—erring, because they were still pagans. Their first experience in bartering with these people proved to them that it was well worth their while to risk the dangers and vicissitudes of the journey for the sake of getting a cargo of beaver skins in exchange for an iron axe. Later they adopted the method of adding to Novgorod's store of costly furs by levying tribute, in the name of that Republic—the forests nearer home providing the more common skins such as bear, lynx, marten and fox. Journeys into the remoter parts always partook, more or less, of the nature of an exploration. For each river, as they went along, they had to build special rafts and boats, which they were obliged sometimes to carry

across the forest to the next lake or river. "Merchandise was laden into doshniks, that is barks of the country, to be carried from there by river into Vologda. They departed from St. Nicholas up the River Dwina: by continual sailing, rowing, setting with poles or drawing of men for a thousand miles" they eventually arrived at their destination.

Although in Central Russia there were a few roads which united the chief cities—Yaroslav, Ryazan, Tver and Moscow—with each other, the rest of the Empire depended for communication almost entirely upon its waterways, and thus from Fort St. Nicholas to Moscow the journey had to be pursued for 1100 versts along the River Dwina. There was not even a track between Moscow and Vilna, all communication between the two capitals being cut off in summer on account of the swamps. The conditions were practically the same even where highways existed, such as those between Novgorod and Narva in Esthonia, whence merchandise was carried to the ports of Reval and Riga for export to the German Hansa-towns; for there was only one really good road in that part of the country, and this ran between Pskov and Riga. An Italian traveller, who found himself in Russia at this period, speaks with feeling of the difficulties attending a journey to Moscow. "Muscovia is impossible to reach in summer on account of bad roads and dirt; in spring the melting snow turns the fields into veritable marshes, while in rainy summers the meadows stand under water altogether."

No wonder that winter was looked upon as the

best season for journeys when the hard, frozen, snow-covered ground was preferable for travelling. But what this *best* stands for can be judged from the fact that there were no inns, or any other kind of shelter by the way, for the villages which could be seen only here and there in the distance were too far off the track to be of any service. In spite, however, of these disabilities, all places which were without waterways had their raw produce brought to them in winter and on sledges. Merchants learnt to carry on their trade in a very leisurely fashion, being obliged to wait in one place if a thaw set in until the ground was again frozen over, perhaps six months later. In spite of the endless difficulties of transit caused by climatic and geographical conditions, trade with the outer world was carried on with enterprise in all directions, and goods were imported into Russia from West and South and East.

Trading between Moscow and Astrakhan, which were 2800 versts apart, was fraught with many dangers. For centuries the Volga was a very perilous route, for in certain places on the eastern bank lurked nomadic tribes, ready to pounce upon the passing caravans lured thither by trickery ; in other places traders were in danger of attacks by Don Cossacks from the western banks, while all along the river they risked encountering the piratical Volga Cossacks. Merchants, therefore, were wont to profit by the embassy which the Khan sent almost every year to the Grand Duke of Muscovy. Some three hundred merchants would join such a caravan, which was protected by hundreds of mounted and armed Tatars who drove in front of them herds of

horses, some of^l which they killed and ate on the journey, the rest being for sale—for already in those days the Tatars were dealers in horseflesh.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, Perm, a large tract of land lying east of the Volga, was conquered by Prince Kourbski, on behalf of Ivan III, and by the end of the sixteenth century civilization had been introduced amongst the aborigines by the colonists from Novgorod. But life for the settlers remained very insecure, owing to the frequent inroads of nomads—Ostyaks, Tcheremiss, Kirghise and Tatars. Kourbski had crossed the mountain range, and, after passing through the “Iron door,” had penetrated right into the “Siberian land.” During this expedition he seized many towns in Yugoria, making their princes vassals of Muscovy. Russia’s hold over these distant parts, however, was very slight, Muscovy not being in a position to enforce the regular payment of tribute; and in course of time these little principalities fell into the hands of the Nogai Tatars, under whom they were welded together into one Khanate, the capital of which was Isker, or Sibir.

In the year 1552, after the fall of Kazan, Ediger the Tsar of Sibir sent envoys to the Tsar of Muscovy to congratulate him on this conquest and, fearing lest a similar fate might befall his own land, suggested to the great White Tsar that he should become Protector of Sibir. Ivan, ignoring the etiquette of present-giving, accepted Ediger’s handsome gift of 700 sables as so much tribute, and treated the envoys of the people whom they represented as though they were his own subjects. In fact, from this time forward, he demanded

regular tribute of 1000 sables per annum, and a few years later, Ediger virtually became "the Slave of the Tsar and the Grand Duke of all the Russias," the tribute being increased to 1,000,000 skins. This was hotly resented by the free and hitherto independent Tatars, who had also another grievance against the Tsar, in that certain of their princes who had come to him as envoys had been detained as prisoners.

In 1563 Ediger was overthrown by Koutchum, a clever and powerful warrior of the Steppes, who with the help of his relations, founded a new Tatar Empire. Feeling himself strong enough to defy Muscovy, he quietly ignored its claims. Of this Prince the Chronicler writes: "From the Steppes came the Tsar Koutchum with many followers. He took possession of the town of Sibir, killed the princes Ediger and Bekbulata, and called himself Tsar of Siberia. Tsar Koutchum ruled over Siberia for many years in riches and plenty, taking tribute from peoples of other tongues, until the year when, according to the will of God, the kingdom was destroyed and delivered into the hands of the Christian Tsar."

It was not long before this independent Tatar was brought, in spite of himself, into communication with the Tsar of Muscovy. A Tatar who had been for many years a captive in Moscow, arrived with a letter from Ivan IV asking Koutchum why he had neglected to send the customary tribute. A year later the Tatar messenger returned from Siberia bringing with him a letter from Koutchum which, the Tsar being absent, was opened and read by the Council of the Zemshtchina boyars. They sent to Ivan a translation of this sur-



THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA.

From the painting by V. J. Sourikov, in the Emperor Alexander III Museum, Petrograd.

prising document, every line of which breathed the spirit of freedom and proud independence of that erstwhile Nogai Steppe-rider who, by the strength of his own brain and hand, had become Tsar of Siberia. The letter opened thus—

“God is rich.

“The free man Koutchum, Tsar—to the Grand Duke and Tsar,” and contained a request that Ivan would liberate the captive Tatar envoys, while he, for his part, expressed his willingness to live at peace with his “elder brother,” should that brother desire it. “Send envoys” was the abrupt ending of this bold letter. The White Tsar took no notice of this missive: it did not suit his purpose to let the Tsar of Siberia pose as his equal and as being in a position to dictate terms.

Meanwhile Koutchum continued to reign in confidence and strength, and as an ardent follower of Mahomet, to propagate Islam amongst the tribes he had brought into subjection. He also proceeded to extend his rule over Voguls, Ostyaks, and Yugors, all of whom were tributary to Moscow: but realizing that such high-handed action might bring down upon him the vengeance of Ivan, and being also genuinely desirous of peace, he decided to send another letter to the White Tsar with proposals of good-will. These proposals, however, did not fit in with the Russian Tsar’s intentions; for ever since he had received the gift of precious sables from Ediger he had determined to make Siberia a protectorate, in fact, to use his own words, “to put it under the care of his mighty hand” as a preliminary to conquest. Therefore in reply to Koutchum’s letter, he

tried to induce the bold Nogai to sign documents and treaties, besides demanding a tribute of 1000 sables to be delivered into the hand of his envoy, who was also to be presented with 1000 squirrel skins for his personal use.

Koutchum was too clever and too much on the alert to be caught napping. He refused to be bound down by any agreements, and as a simple and drastic way of winding up the negotiations, had the envoy killed. The time had not yet come for Muscovy to enter the "Golden Ground" nor to extend her power across the "Girdle of the World."

Meanwhile on the western side of the mountain range, in the land of Perm, of which Tcherdan was the seat of Government, only a few Russian colonists had settled, and what towns there were had been built by private initiative. Solikamsk, for instance, was founded by the family of the Kalininkovs, and from this town trade was carried on between Siberia and Moscow, along the rivers Kama, Volga, Oka and Moskva. Chief among the pioneers of Russian colonization were the Stroganovs who had emigrated from Rostov. The brothers Stroganov were clever, enterprising men who soon became the chief traders of those parts, and were, in fact, merchant politicians. The eldest member of the family, Anikiev Stroganov, sent a humble petition to the Tsar, begging his permission to colonize the vast tracts of land along the Kama which were uninhabited, assuring Ivan that never had any tribute been received from those tracts either by Kazan or by Muscovy. In return for permission to settle there he promised to build forts and to mount guns for

the purpose of protecting this borderland against the Nogai or other invading hordes.

The Tsar, after making inquiries, sent a letter to Stroganov granting him his request, and gave him 100 versts of land along both shores of the Kama as leasehold, free of any payment whatsoever, even of taxes, for a period of 20 years, for himself and for any other colonists whom he might invite to join him. This letter or charter, signed by the Tsar in the year 7066 (1558) gave to the Stroganovs the right to clear forests, to sow and to build, to fish and to make salt and saltpetre; but should any minerals, whether of silver, copper or lead, be found in those lands, the Government was to be informed, and none of them were to be handled "without our knowledge." The Stroganovs were also exempted from any postal tribute, that is, they were not obliged to provide envoys who might be passing through the country with horses and provisions free of cost, but were permitted to supply these at ordinary prices.

In possession of this charter, Anikiev Stroganov sent round "criers" in all directions, in order to collect such settlers as he was at liberty to invite. These invitations had, however, to be issued with caution, for the terms of the charter excluded all robbers, thieves and "tyaglie lyudi." Yet it was just these latter who would have gladly come, since it was they who paid the taxes or, in other ways, bore the burden of imperial duties, which weighed heavily enough. All the people of Russia at that time, with the exception of the clergy, were divided into two classes—those who were enrolled and were "tyaglie lyudi," and those who were free of

all liability. The former were subdivided into those who performed direct service, military or civic—such as the boyars and nobles—and those who paid taxes or bore other burdens—such as peasants and merchants. The peasants were taxed according to the area of land owned by the village community, and the merchants on the value of their stock-in-trade.

It was a common practice in Russia for those who found taxation and local conditions unbearable, to pack up their goods and chattels and migrate elsewhere. In fact the threat to do this, if taxation were not abated, was the only hold which the citizens had over their Government. Accordingly this practice of running away from circumstances which gave no hope of remedy became deep-rooted in the heart of the Russians. The rustic proverb which says: "The fish goes where the water is deepest and man where he fares best," was but the expression of a national habit, "for it has ever been a characteristic of the Russian people, that instead of pulling themselves together and offering organized resistance in order to better their conditions, they run away and seek a new fatherland, where the conditions are better for them." This fact explains the spread of Russian colonization; and as the power of Muscovy increased and the long arm of the Central Government stretched over more and ever more distant parts of the country, the only way of escape was to go still further afield. No wonder, therefore, that the invitation to settle down on the lands granted to the Stroganovs was readily accepted by peasants, artisans, traders and homeless wanderers. Villages sprang up, townships developed and formed centres for trade with the native

tribes, and the Stroganovs, thanks to their special commercial privileges, soon became immensely wealthy. After a time the Government also began to send peasants from a less fertile soil to these fruitful lands.

So pleased was the Tsar with the activities of these pioneers, that he readily granted to another of the Stroganov brothers land lying along the banks of the river Tchoussovo, together with the right to keep a small standing army of free Cossacks, as this district was exposed to raids.

Meanwhile, on the Asiatic side of the Ural mountains, Tsar Koutchum was shaking his head with disapproval, not unmixed with dismay, at this gradual advance of Muscovite rule towards his dominions, and he bore a special grudge against the Stroganovs. On one occasion, just to give the Russians a gentle warning, he sent his heir, Prince Mahmet-Kul, to attack some Ostyak tribes, which were tributary to Russia. After carrying out this enterprise, the Tatar prince threatened the little township of Tchoussovo and also stirred up the Tcheremiss to make raids into the Stroganov lands.

When the reports of all this reached Ivan, he granted to the Stroganovs a new charter whereby they were permitted to cross the Ural mountains and to build forts along the great rivers Tobol, Irtish and Tura, for he was anxious to subdue "Siberia," a name which for Russians included all the land on the other side of the mountains. The Stroganovs, however, whose main object was trade, were far too shrewd to risk their commercial prospects by acts of aggression, and they also realized only too well the utter impossibility of conquering Siberia. How could such a mere handful

of frontiersmen undertake to build forts in new and strange lands when they were not numerous enough to colonize their own territory, and had not sufficient warriors to protect those who had settled in it? Accordingly the new charter with its lavish grants of Siberian land, remained a dead letter, and Ivan the Terrible had to possess his soul in patience yet a little longer. Repeated attacks were made by Ostyaks and Voguls against the Russian settlers. Prince Pelym even boldly advanced against the town of Toverdin.

It was at this juncture that a very welcome, though unsought contingent of armed men—a band of Cossacks, freebooters and pirates—came to the assistance of the Stroganovs. The leader of these worthies was Yermak, whose grandfather, a citizen of the town of Vladimir and a driver and carrier by profession, had been so poor that he was obliged to take any fare that offered and, not infrequently, found himself giving a lift to robbers. One day while driving a party of highwaymen through the forest of Murom he was taken in charge together with his fare, and thrown into prison. Fortunately he managed to escape and rejoin his family, with whom he migrated further East. He died soon after, and when his widow heard of the invitation of the Stroganovs for all and sundry to come and settle on their lands, she and her family gladly responded to the call and made their way to the tax-free country.

Among the grandsons of the widow was one, Vassili, who had started life as an oarsman on one of the boats which plied up and down the rivers Volga and Kama. To this strong, capable, and adven-

ture-loving youth such an existence was too dreary and monotonous. A ready talker, he soon won over others to his point of view and, having collected a band of followers, persuaded them to forsake their peaceful occupations and to become pirates, or free Cossacks as they called themselves, their bold leader, whom, for some unknown reason they called Yermak, becoming their ataman. They lived the wild happy-go-lucky life of freebooters, infesting the river with their flotilla of small boats; merchants and others who refused to give them what they demanded were simply taken by the throat. Yermak and his friends did things on a large scale, robbing and murdering to their heart's content. Occasionally soldiers were sent to repress them, and gradually the sphere of action of these bandits became narrowed until stern necessity forced them to leave their happy hunting grounds in the big rivers and to seek shelter further afield. They had made themselves such a nuisance that a price had been put upon their heads.

Not satisfied with merely attacking river caravans and robbing Russian and Oriental merchants, they had had the effrontery to attack the town of Saraitchik which belonged to one of the Nogai Khans, a vassal of Muscovy. The aggrieved prince sent bitter complaints to the Tsar, who wrote to explain his innocence in the matter and promised to have the offenders hanged. Thus Yermak and another ataman named Koltso became outlaws, and in their endeavour to escape the "Arm of the Law," fled with their followers in a north-easterly direction until they reached the Stroganov lands on the river Tchoussovo.

For the little community of colonists it was no small advantage to have their numbers swelled by a band of warriors ; but opinions differ as to the attitude towards them adopted by the Stroganovs. The Chronicler of that family insists that they were Cossacks in Imperial service, ignoring the fact of their being outlaws. According to him, they were supplied with food, furnished with weapons and ammunition, and then sent out to conquer Siberia, but other chroniclers maintain that Yermak's band only passed through the Stroganov lands on their way East, and that the expedition against the Ostyaks and Voguls was undertaken on their own initiative.

Unfortunately for the Stroganovs, the very day after the bold Cossacks had turned their backs upon Tchoussovo in search of further adventure, the Voguls and Ostyaks attacked several little Russian townships, taking a number of prisoners, and it was reported to the Tsar that the Stroganovs had given shelter to runaway Cossacks, who had now gone across the Ural. Ivan was extremely incensed when he heard the news, and in a letter vibrating with annoyance he says : "If these men had been used merely to guard the settlements—but now they will spoil everything for me, for the Ostyaks who have made no demur about paying me tribute will refuse it as soon as they see the Cossacks." He commanded that the Cossacks should be instantly recalled and that Yermak and Koltso should be sent to Perm to be hanged. These orders, however, arrived too late, for the band of intrepid adventurers had been absolutely lost sight of. What had they been doing

in the meanwhile? According to the Cossack song—

“On the Volga, on the Kama—
The Cossacks lived—the free men!
Had an Ataman—
Yermak called they him!
That this Ataman
Quietly whispered
To his bold friends—true
Cossacks, brothers all!
Here’s a thought for you—
When the summer’s gone,
And the winter’s come—
Where, oh where, shall we spend our time?
On the Volga live? There as thieves exist?
To the Yaik go?—is too long a stride!
Go against Kazan? There we’ll meet the Tsar, meet the
Terrible!
He has sent his men,
Forty thousand against us few—
Let us go and take Siberia!”

And that is what they did.

It was a desperate undertaking to venture into an unknown land inhabited by people renowned for fierceness and treachery. The Cossacks sailed up the river Tchoussovo until they came to a big cave where they spent the winter, and here, so goes the story, they buried all the treasures they had accumulated as pirates. Search has been made for this treasure from time to time by the local peasants, but no trace of it has ever been discovered.

For Yermak and his friends, however, a far greater source of wealth was to be opened up. When spring came, they continued their course up the river

Tchoussovo, and when they arrived at the river Serebryannaya, before them loomed the great mountain range. Along this river they passed, first between banks covered with cedar trees and then between precipitous rocks. At last they came to a watershed across which they had to carry their light boats, until they reached a river running down on the other side. Here, in the new country, Yermak passed by many nomadic tribes who made no attempt to hinder his advance, having nothing to lose by it. Neither did the people in the settlements through which they passed attack the strangers, for the flotilla of small boats was to them but a new and interesting sight. Deeper and deeper did these bold Cossacks penetrate until they reached the river Tura. There, however, they came into contact with the outposts of the Tsardom of Siberia, and their smooth, uninterrupted progress was at an end. The rudely armed guardians of the borderland showered arrows upon the advancing flotilla, but a few shots from the guns of the Cossacks dispersed these Voguls and Ostyaks, who fled terror-stricken at the noise and the surprising flash of fire. Yermak's men followed them up, killing many of them and destroying some of their settlements.

This first victory encouraged Yermak and filled him with hope for the future. Proceeding further, he entered the river Tobol where it is joined by the Tavda. Here his band encountered a host of Tatars, or Sibirs, whose leader, Yeptchank, was made captive and brought before Yermak. It transpired that he was in the service of the Tsar Koutchum, about whom the Cossack leader was anxious to glean in-

formation. Having first impressed the Tatar with the marvels of a Russian firearm, he had little difficulty in getting out of him all he desired to know. He learnt that Koutchum was living in the town of Isker, or Sibir ; that he was unpopular with the natives on account of his attempts to proselytize them, for both Voguls and Ostyaks preferred their idols to Mohammed ; that Koutchum had a great army and was at war with many tribes and nations, and that, whereas the Khan himself was old and blind, his noble young heir was a gallant warrior, who had no equal in all Siberia. Satisfied with the information received, Yermak bade Yeptchank depart in peace, and told him that he was free to go back to his master and give him a greeting from Yermak.

When the Siberian Tsar heard the news of this unexpected advance of a band of Russians, and of their wonderful fire weapons, he gave orders to his Tatars to prepare themselves at all points to resist the terrible foe. He sent for his vassals, and having gathered an army, despatched it under the leadership of the famous Prince Mahmet-Kul to meet the Cossacks, while he himself remained in his capital which he had prepared for a siege. Mahmet-Kul with his army met the Cossacks sailing down the Tobol, and the Chronicler writes that when they saw the hosts of Tatars "they were not a little afraid," for they soon realized that it was no longer roaming nomads with whom they had to deal, but with a people defending their Fatherland.

The Cossacks were outnumbered by thirty to one,

but powder and shot proved powerful allies. Many of Yermak's men were, however, killed, and in order to save both men and ammunition the leaders gave the order to row away, which they did. Arrows were shot after them, but the Cossacks, protected by their iron armour, continued their difficult journey along the river Tobol.

Danger lurked upon every side, and frequent attacks were sustained. Occasionally the shower of arrows would irritate Yermak and cause him to issue the order to land and "give it to them hot." The greatest drawback they had to encounter was the lack of sleep; for the Sibirs kept up their harassing warfare night and day. At last Yermak decided to encamp in a little Tatar town which he had taken *en route*, but there was to be no rest for the weary Russians, who saw that, from the hills of Tchuvash, hordes of Tatars were approaching.

What was to be done? First of all a Council was called, and sitting around the fire, Cossack fashion, they discussed the situation. Some were for an immediate return—they had gone far enough and had had enough of Siberia; it was already fifty-three days since they had left Russia, and what was the use of going still further? "We can never conquer Siberia," they said, "we shall only die in the attempt and lose our gain and booty. The rivers are freezing up; how can we live in these steppes without food, without warm clothing, and with the Tatars ever ready to fall upon us? Let us turn and flee!" Yermak, however, was not the man to turn back: "Comrades!" said he, "you must be men and be willing to work.

We are already almost at the gates of Sibir—come, let us conquer Siberia and great gain will be ours.” But he had the utmost difficulty in persuading his followers to keep up heart, and this crisis was only a foretaste of what awaited him thenceforward—a perpetual struggle to maintain the *morale* of his men. Behind him, however, lay the life of an outlaw—before him freedom and honour. He could have amassed wealth at home by living on robbery, but here he had found a better way, and it was at this crucial moment in his career that Yermak, the highwayman, merged into the hero. He dared his cowardly followers to run away; he inspired their flagging souls with new courage—holding out before them visions of glory and honour—until at last he won over the whole Council. “If we perish,” they said, “we perish with honour!” They all decided to go forward.

On October 23rd, 1581, a bloody combat took place not far from the Siberian capital. The Tatars began by hemming in the Cossacks, but Yermak and Koltso organized a stout resistance to their attack. On every side the battle raged furiously, bullets and arrows whizzing through the air. The Russians formed a close wall, standing shoulder to shoulder, fighting with sword and lance, and many were the Siberian warriors who fell under their doughty blows, but they fought fiercely, these fanatical Mohammedans. Very soon the Russians perceived that they had to deal with brave men and desperate warriors who would not be daunted either by the sound of cannon or by the sight of fire. The famous old soldier, Tsar Koutchum, stood on a hillock watching the movements of his army and

praying to Allah for victory. The Cossacks, however, were unconquerable. For both sides the issue was one of life and death—no quarter was given and every effort was put forth until it became a hand-to-hand fight. The ranks of the Tatars were thinning rapidly—and Yermak also had lost a fifth of his men—when the battle came suddenly to an end with the wounding of Mahmet-Kul; for as soon as the Ostyak princes perceived that he had fallen, they forsook their liege lord and fled back to their homes.

Beaten by the enemy and forsaken by his vassals, the Tatar Tsar gathered together his remaining men, and, realizing the hopelessness of the position, proceeded to evacuate the city. His retinue, to a man, were forced to leave house and home and follow their leader into the unknown.

The Cossacks in the meantime, unaware of what was going on, and exhausted by the battle which had lasted into the night, were taking their well-earned rest. Next morning Yermak and his 500¹ Cossacks advanced "without fear" (so says the Chronicler) towards the capital. They came nearer and nearer, but, to their surprise, met with no resistance, neither did they hear nor see any signs of life. This made the Ataman very uneasy—he apprehended an ambush, and the longer the inexplicable silence reigned, the more his suspicions increased. For a time they did not dare to advance, and when after three days Yermak ventured to approach Isker—he was astonished to find it absolutely deserted. Siberia was theirs!

This indeed was a triumph for the homeless Cossacks

¹ Reports differ—Some say 500, others 4500, and others 5000.

who, during a two months' expedition, had succeeded in achieving the conquest of the trans-Ural land up to the very banks of the river Irtish, and they at once proceeded to make themselves thoroughly at home in their new surroundings.

On the fourth day after their entry into Isker, the native inhabitants of that town returned, and one of the Ostyak princes offered to supply Yermak with food. Before long the families of the Ostyaks became quite friendly with the conquerors.

It was now that Yermak's latent powers of organization and administration manifested themselves. As he had only 500 Cossacks to back him up, it was obviously not by force of numbers but by sheer strength of character that he kept his hold over Siberia for three whole years. It was his personality which had conquered Siberia, and his resourceful brain which enabled him to profit by other people's experience as well as by his own, and so to maintain himself in such a precarious position.

After the occupation of Isker, the approach of winter made further operations for the time impossible, and the Russians accordingly remained in the city. Before long some of the aborigines came to pay homage to the mighty man who had put to flight their former conqueror Tsar Koutchum. Their princes brought food and other gifts to Yermak, who displayed marvellous skill in exploiting the resentment which he knew to be rife among the Pagans against the Moslems. He soon won them over to his side and induced several of their chiefs to swear an oath of allegiance to Muscovy, and altogether played his rôle of

ruler with tact and generosity. The Ostyaks brought him the produce of the field, showing him every sign of friendliness, while he, on his part, gave strict orders to his men not to injure or harm the natives in any way. So kindly disposed were the natives that they offered of their own accord to pay tribute to the Russian Tsar. They also acted as guides and showed many other signs of good-will.

Then winter set in—a terrible winter, with severe frosts, blinding snowstorms and mountainous snow-drifts blocking the way. There had been no sign of Koutchum, nor was there an enemy within sight. Yermak's Cossacks rode about the neighbourhood gathering in tribute, or went fishing or hunting for food, there being no corn in the district. At last, however, feeling that he could no longer look on and let his kingdom be thus wrested from his grasp, the Tsar Koutchum sent his heir once more against the intruders. Prince Mahmet-Kul made several attempts to attack the Cossacks and once succeeded in killing twenty of them, but was then beaten back by Yermak. When the winter was passed, the Tatar Prince again sallied forth to make another attack, but Yermak, having been warned of his intention, sent a little company of fifty Cossacks to make a sortie by night against the Sibir camp. Taking them completely unawares, the Cossacks fell upon the sleeping foe, took Prince Mahmet-Kul prisoner and brought him to Yermak, by whom he was treated very generously and graciously. Thus the blind old fugitive Tsar Koutchum, already forsaken by many of his vassals, now found himself bereft of his heir. To add to his misfortunes,

the son of Prince Bekbulata, taking advantage of the situation, set to work to avenge the death of his father by attacking the now helpless monarch who had brought it about.

Koutchum's calamity was Yermak's opportunity, and he proceeded at once with the subjugation of the Ostyak princes. One of these, Demian by name, gave the Cossacks a good deal of trouble, for he and his two thousand men shut themselves up in a fortress on the steep banks of the river Irtish and succeeded in withstanding the enemy for a considerable time. It was rumoured that this success was due to the presence in their midst of a very famous gilded idol which had come to them from Russia in days long gone by when the Russians were still bowing down to wood and stone. Report said that this idol was kept in a large basin filled with water, of which the Ostyaks drank so as to be infused with courage, and that, being guarded day and night, it could not be carried away by stealth, as an enterprising native suggested. Finally, however, the fortress fell before the guns of the Cossacks, but no idol was ever found within its walls.

The bold conquerors continued their course down the great river, and on one occasion came across some native priests who were offering up sacrifices to their gods for protection against the "Russian thunder"; but at the first glimpse of the Cossacks they evinced more faith in their legs than in their gods, and fled precipitately into the forest. Further on, where the river narrows between high banks, the Russians were boldly attacked by armed natives, who, however, were

speedily dispersed by a few shots from the Russian "fire weapons."

There remained yet to be subdued the most powerful of the Ostyak princes, Samar, who was joined by eight of the other princes—all as determined as himself to offer organized resistance to the advancing Russians. Unfortunately for his cause, he omitted the simple precaution of placing guards around his camp at night, thus making it possible for the Cossacks to come unobserved upon the sleeping Ostyak princes. Too late to defend themselves, they awoke to their danger; Samar was killed and his allies scattered in every direction. Subsequently the vanquished princes agreed to pay tribute to the Great White Tsar.

Following this rout of the enemy, Yermak proceeded to capture the principal Ostyak town of Nazym, but he lost his friend the Ataman Nikita Pan and several of his followers in the attempt. After this he sailed down the river Obi, and took several little forts situated on its banks. But he soon found that further progress was impossible owing to the broadening out of the great river, which is, at this point, from three to four versts wide, and winds its way northward through an endless stretch of barren, snow-covered marshland until it reaches the frozen ocean.

Yermak now returned to Isker, where he had left some of his followers, and was received by them with great rejoicing. Even the natives, whom he had subjugated, came forward to greet him and to show honour to the conqueror. His position, however, was more than precarious, for his following was sorely diminished in numbers; the powder was spent, provisions were all

but exhausted, and no communication with Russia was possible, winter having begun to set in, and the rivers being covered with floating ice. The problem which now faced Yermak was a very serious one : whether to remain in Siberia without the means of resisting probable attacks, and possibly without provisions, or to risk the loss of all the newly conquered country by returning to Russia. If he remained he was faced with the further question—how to make his conquest secure and how to ensure permanence for his work. He realized that, for the time being, the holding of Siberia depended entirely upon himself, for he knew full well that, if his presence were withdrawn, his followers would not be able to retain it.

The solution of this question shows the astuteness of Yermak's far-seeing mind. He—the outlaw—decided to send envoys to the Tsar at Moscow and to present him with Siberia. Truly a wise and generous thought, but very difficult to put into execution, and a most daring plan. Nevertheless he determined to venture all on one throw and to take the risk of diminishing his small force by fifty men, who should go with the Ataman Koltso to Russia and convey the news of the conquest of Siberia. There was the possibility that the fifty men might lose their way while crossing the Urals by what should be a direct, but what was as yet an entirely unknown route. What if the Governor of Perm should refuse to believe the story and hang Koltso, which in fact it was his duty to do ? And even supposing he reached Moscow alive, how could such a man hope to find credence for his tale ? Yet this seemed to Yermak the only way to confirm and establish

his work, for what was impossible for a mere handful of Cossacks could easily be accomplished by the hosts of the Tsar.

Yermak entrusted Koltso with two letters, one to the Stroganovs, informing them that his expedition across the Urals had been successful—that the “Sultan” Tsar Koutchum had been conquered, Mahmet-Kul made captive, and the land of the Siberians taken and made tributary. In the other letter, which was addressed to the Tsar, Yermak expressed regret for all his past misdeeds and informed Ivan the Terrible that to his dominions had been added the Tsardom of Sibir. He also wrote that he was awaiting further orders and that he was quite willing to die, but that if permitted to live he would endeavour to win new victories. He sent Ivan a present of 250 skins of sable, 30 of black fox, and 50 of beaver.

Towards the end of January Koltso and his fifty men started off on their perilous journey. Over icefields and through primeval forests, they “followed the track of the wolf” on snowshoes and on little sledges drawn by dogs or reindeer, and finally, led by native guides, they crossed the Urals. But on the other side they had to make a halt and await the opening of the rivers, so that several months elapsed before they arrived at the Stroganovs. Altogether they were ten months in reaching Moscow.

The tidings of the conquest of Siberia came as a delightful surprise to Ivan. For days nothing else was spoken of in Moscow but the news of “the new Tsardom which God had given to Russia.” The church bells were rung calling the faithful to a



STATUE OF YERMAK.

By Antakolski.

thanksgiving service—it was as if a ray of light were piercing the impenetrable gloom which seemed to have enveloped Moscow. Exaggerated accounts of the victory were spread abroad, and people began to speak of the countless numbers killed by Yermak and his few Cossacks in Siberia; speculation was rife as to the wonderful treasures to be found there. It was as though the trans-Ural lands had never been heard of before, and the fact that tribute had been paid by Koutchum's predecessor was forgotten for the time being. Nothing must detract from the lustre of the fame of Yermak. The once outlawed Koltso was admitted into the presence of the Tsar, before whom he bowed his guilty head and with tears in his eyes kissed the tyrant's hand. The rude Cossack found himself the hero of the hour, and this ex-pirate had the pleasure of hearing himself spoken of as a valiant knight. Yet it may be safe to assume that he was glad enough when the moment came for him to return to the wilds of Siberia.

Koltso took with him the permission to collect on the way back as many huntsmen as were willing to come with him and settle in the "Land of Sables." The Tsar wished the occupation of his new territory to be carried out in proper style, and therefore, in order to provide for the spiritual needs of the new colonists, he commanded the Bishop of Vologda to send ten priests with their families to Siberia. He also sent Prince Bolkhovsky and 300 armed men, with orders to pick up a company of 50 horsemen from the Stroganovs, and immediately on arrival in Siberia to dispatch the captive Tatar prince, Mahmet-

Kul to Moscow. When giving these orders Ivan had not realized the impossibility of such a journey at that season, for the Urals were impassable on horseback in winter. When, however, he was made to understand the conditions, he sent messengers to Bolkhovsky with orders to await the spring, but his orders came too late, for that noble warrior, in obedience to the monarch's command had already started on his terrible journey. The Prince and his men accomplished the feat of crossing 500 versts of mountains, forests and plains on skis, but so insufficient had been their preparations, so scanty their nourishment, that, when at last they reached their destination, they were utterly exhausted.

The Imperial messenger delivered to Yermak an affectionate letter from the Tsar which conveyed to the runaway Cossack a complete pardon, and expressed Russia's "eternal gratitude" for the great service which he had rendered her. The title of "Prince of Siberia" was bestowed upon him and he was told to go on ruling and administering as he had done heretofore, so as to establish law and order and ensure respect for the Central Authority. Ivan also sent him costly presents—a fur coat from his own back, two splendid suits of armour, and a large silver bowl, besides rolls of silks and other materials. The Cossacks, for their part, treated the Imperial representative and his men with every honour, and presented him with sable furs.

Yermak, with his increased following, now prepared for further exploits, but his hopes were doomed to disappointment; for the almost superhuman strain

through which the new arrivals had passed had begun to tell upon them, causing them to fall easy victims to the bitter cold and to scurvy, and many of them succumbed after dreadful sufferings—among them Prince Bolkhovsky. To make matters worse, the Cossacks' food supply ran short, a long spell of extreme cold and a succession of blizzards preventing the natives from bringing bread and the Russians from hunting game. Starvation stared them in the face, and the number of sick and dying increased, and it was not until the spring that their sufferings became less acute.

Then at last was Yermak able to send Prince Mahmet-Kul to Moscow, the Cossack leader taking advantage of this opportunity to implore the Tsar to send more men without delay; otherwise he would be unable to hold the new territory. In fact, matters were beginning to look very black for the brave Yermak. The presence of Mahmet-Kul in their midst had so far rendered the whole community immune from attack by Koutchum; but with the departure of the hostage the tide of fortune seemed to turn against the "Prince of Siberia." In spite of the addition to his numbers, his position became more and more difficult, chiefly on account of the changing attitude of the Ostyak princes. The sending of the Tatar prince to Moscow had aroused their suspicions; it had begun to dawn upon them that, after all, there might be more in Yermak's policy of conciliation than appeared on the surface. True, he had proved himself a generous conqueror, but what was to follow?

The first to give trouble was Karatch, who had

professed enmity to Koutchum and loyalty to Russia, and who now, under the pretext of needing help to resist attacks made upon him by Nogai Tatars, asked Yermak for assistance. Trusting in his assurances of good faith, Yermak sent Koltso with forty men to his aid. All, however, were treacherously put to death. The great leader "bemoaned their deaths as though they had been his own children, and especially did he bemoan the loss of his staunch friend and comrade." The news of this disaster soon spread, and the Cossacks began to be assailed on every side. Karatch planned a regular attack upon them and invested Sibir, hoping to starve the Cossacks into surrender. Yermak and his men, however, held out for several months, and at last, when driven to desperation, they risked a sortie by night. They successfully attacked the sleeping beleaguers, killing a large number of them before the whole camp was sufficiently aroused to defend itself. Then a battle ensued in which the Russians were victorious, but the respite thus gained did not last long, for the enemy soon collected his scattered forces and returned with reinforcements from other native tribes. Again, however, the Tatars were completely routed. Once more the handful of Cossacks had defeated a superior force, and once more Yermak's supremacy was acknowledged by the surrounding natives.

All went well with the Cossacks during the summer of the year 1584, and Yermak, in order to keep alive the sense of fear already implanted in the breast of his foes, decided to pursue Karatch and to extend Russia's rule still further east. He succeeded in

this enterprise, and after taking various little towns and forts, returned to Isker laden with new trophies of victory.

During the two years that the Cossacks had been holding Siberia, commercial intercourse with the Far East had been carried on; caravans from Bokhara came to the city and fairs were set up at which the Russians bartered furs for the produce of the East. News reached Yermak that one of these caravans had been arrested on its way to Sibir by Koutchum who was roaming over the steppes. This news so incensed him that, with forty-nine of his most trusty followers, he set off at once in search of his elusive antagonist. Up the river they sailed in their little boats, endeavouring all day long to trace his whereabouts, but in vain, for the nomad prince was always moving from place to place.

As the day drew to a close, Yermak, realizing the risk of going any further with so few men and also the danger of resting in these unknown parts, gave the order to turn back—tired as they were. But nightfall and the gathering gloom, deepened by an approaching storm, compelled the Cossacks to seek shelter. They landed on a little island close to the left bank of the river which was within the Russian territory, but for once Yermak omitted to take the usual precautions. Perhaps he considered the deep river a sufficient safeguard, or it may be that the howling wind and the swishing sound of torrential rain, together with great fatigue after a strenuous day, dulled his sense of danger. The weary Cossacks tied the boats to the slender willows and, without

leaving anyone to watch over their safety, fell into the heavy sleep of exhaustion, from which forty-eight of them never awoke. For Koutchum from his hiding-place nigh at hand had been watching the movements of the Russians, but had hesitated to attack them, for the possibility of their being unguarded was outside his calculations. Finally, however, he sent a Tatar to reconnoitre, and when the scout returned with the incredible news that the men were all fast asleep, he sent another to find out if this was true. The second messenger not only confirmed the report, but brought with him a powder-horn which he had taken from the side of one of the sleepers.

Then, under cover of the storm and darkness, Koutchum and his men forded the river, and, to quote the Chronicler, "his heart rejoiced and he laughed within himself as he fell upon the sleepers"—the conquerors of his realm. Only two awoke in time to realize the danger. Yermak—who was one of the two—ran for the boats; but the storm had torn them from their moorings. In despair he leapt into the deep and swift-flowing river, but his coat-of-mail speedily dragged him down under the water and there the hero met his death. His unhampered companion managed to reach the other side, and to bring to his comrades in Isker the tragic news of the death of their leader.

This disaster struck panic into the Russian soldiers and the remaining Cossacks, and as Yermak was no longer there to infuse courage into them, they lost all heart, and nine days afterwards they, to a man,

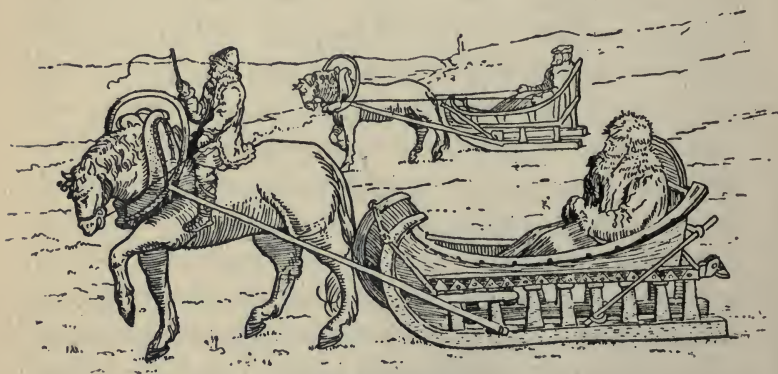
forsook the city and fled back to Russia by the way they had come. A week after his death Yermak's body was found by a Tatar, who recognized the conqueror of Siberia by his heavy iron armour with the golden eagle on breast and back.

Great was the jubilation among the Tatars when they realized that their invincible foe was no more. The Chronicler relates that for six weeks they made sport of the body, riddling it with arrows, and that Koutchum himself was present while it was being thus dishonoured. Many are the tales which have been woven around Yermak's death—among others that the birds of prey, instead of alighting on his body, flew away from it with wild screams ; also that the Tatars were so tormented with evil dreams and fearful visions that, at last, for their own sakes, they buried his remains with the utmost solemnity and respect, offering up thirty oxen in his honour. There, beneath the low branches of a Siberian fir tree, was laid to rest the body of the dead hero, but presently a rumour passed round among the natives that at night a fiery pillar had been seen to rise from the tomb, and this so terrified them, that they did all they could to cover over and hide from view the grave of the famous Cossack. The forest still jealously guards its secret, and what the giants of the Taiga may be whispering to each other as the wind sways them to and fro above the actual spot of his grave, can never be caught by human ears.

It seemed for the moment as though, with the death of Yermak, all that he had achieved would come to naught. But this was not the case ; for the

Cossacks were arrested in their flight and turned back by a relief force which the Tsar had sent to Yermak's assistance. The reconquest of Siberia proved a very difficult undertaking, for the Russian forces had now many enemies to contend with. When, however, these had been subdued, the Siberian lands were held "by easy means, rather by shewing than by using arms."

To the conqueror of Siberia, about whose exploits many a song has been sung and whose memory will ever live in the heart of a grateful people, a monument has been erected in Tobolsk. Unpretentious, like the man it commemorates, is the simple marble obelisk upon which are engraved the words: "To Yermak the Conqueror of Siberia—1581-1584."



RUSSIAN SLEDGE.

After Herberstein's *Muscoviter Wunderbare Historien*, 1567.

CHAPTER XI

THE FALSE DMITRI



FOREIGN MERCENARY.
By De Gheyn, 1558-1617.

DURING Ivan's reign, Muscovy had become a byword for oppression and corruption amongst the foreigners who visited it, and the numerous records of that period, many of them written in English, relate the terrible state of unhappy Russia.

Most of these writers do not fail to express their gratitude for the blessings enjoyed by their own country, and profound pity for the Russians in their abject dependence and helplessness ; at the same time they strongly condemn the immorality and callous brutality rampant.

That Russian life exhibited such grievous conditions cannot be wondered at, when we consider how many decades "Judgment had turned back and Justice stood afar off; for Truth had fallen in the street and Equity could not enter." Contemporary writers,

when trying to express their opinion about Ivan the Terrible, seem at a loss for words in which to describe his terribleness, compared with which—in their opinion—all the horrors committed by other tyrants were but mere child's play. Is it surprising that as a result of such a reign the people, high and low, should have become depraved and dishonest ?

The man who proved most successful in the art of deception at the Court of Muscovy, and who happened also to be in the most favoured position, was Boris Godounov, brother-in-law to Ivan's second son, Feodor. When Ivan the Terrible struck the fatal blow that killed his son and heir, Boris Godounov, who was son-in-law to Ivan's most fiendish instrument, Malyuta Skouratov, had been standing by and, in endeavouring to save the Tsarevitch, himself received a blow which incapacitated him for some three months.

After Ivan's death, his son Feodor, who was feeble both in mind and body, ascended the throne, but although nominally ruler of all the Russias, it was Boris Godounov who governed in his name. The weak-minded but harmless youth, whose inclination was to play at religion, and whose principal amusement was to ring the church bells, was only too glad to leave all his responsibilities in the hands of his capable brother-in-law. The virtual regent was a born statesman who had a keen perception of what the Empire needed, and much of what he did was thus not merely for personal gain. The English Ambassador wrote that : "The great taxes, customes and duties, which were before layd upon the people in the old Emperours time, were now abated, and

some wholly remitted, and no punishments commanded to be used without sufficient and due proofe, although the crime were capital, deserving death. Many dukes and noblemen of great houses, that were under displeasure and imprisoned twenty years by the old Emperour, were now set at liberty and restored to their lands ; all prisoners were set at libertie and their trespasses forgiven. In summe, a great alteration universally in the government followed ; and yet all was done quietly, civilly, peaceably, without trouble to the prince or offence to the subject : and this bred great assurance and honour to the Kingdom."

Foreign politics were also under his control, and with England especially lively intercourse was carried on. The letters exchanged between Queen Elizabeth of England, the Tsar Feodor and Boris throw an interesting light on the relations between the rulers. It was due to the latter's influence that the Tsar wrote to Elizabeth, "We deseyre moste lovinge sister that brotherlie love and amètie may be continued betwixte us."

Conditions left Boris Godounov free to act as he liked, but he never lost sight of the fact that his power was dependent upon the life of the Tsar. Although he was always ready to be generous and gracious, and to do good to others in any way that did not injure himself or put him to personal inconvenience, he shrank from no crime if thereby he could save himself or gain his own ends. A past master in the art of self-restraint, never acting on impulse but carefully calculating every word and action, Boris stuck tenaciously to the line mapped

out for the fulfilment of his desires—to get rich, to gain influence, to raise himself to the summit of power and to establish his family on the throne.

As Boris Godounov could not reckon on the support of the great boyars in his ambitious schemes, he did his best to win over the lesser nobles, who were the chief sufferers from the lack of labour. In 1597 he issued an ukase by which the peasants were tied down to the land, and in this way many millions of hitherto free people were changed into serfs. From a pecuniary point of view this law was a gain to the land-owners, who were now given the right to pursue and fetch back their fugitive serfs. Thousands of these fled to the Cossacks on the Don, thus artificially increasing the turbulent restless element in the land.

Although Boris achieved his aim of winning the gratitude and thereby securing the adherence of the lesser nobility, still between him and his authority stood a young life—that of the infant brother of the Tsar, who had been banished with his mother, the seventh wife of the late Tsar, to Uglitch, a small town at some distance from Moscow. One day a few years later, about the time that the Tsarevitch was a lad eight years old, Uglitch was startled by the news that he had died, and the rumour quickly spread that he had been killed by order of Boris. It has never been ascertained how far the Regent was a party to this murder—whether he had dropped a hint, or whether his creatures had of their own initiative planned the deed, knowing full well how welcome the child's death would be to Boris, and

that, if it was managed cleverly enough, they would be richly rewarded. However it may have been, the fact is that the Regent showered signs of his favour upon their families.

Although overcome with grief, Tsar Feodor took no measures to find out the truth of the report, simply accepting Boris Godounov's statement that the child had died of injuries received during an attack of epilepsy. For the sake of appearances a commission of inquiry was instituted by the powerful minister himself. That the verdict of death by accident should be confirmed was a foregone conclusion, as the members of the commission were in his pay. Ostensibly to punish the culpable negligence of the Tsarevitch's entourage, but in reality to get rid of anyone who could reveal the truth, Boris had almost all the inhabitants of Uglitch massacred or sent into exile. The young Tsaritsa was forced to take the veil.

Seven years after the murder of the Tsarevitch the Tsar Feodor died, and with him the line of Rurik became extinct. After some clever wire-pulling Boris Godounov was elected Tsar, and at "the request of the people" he was crowned Tsar in 1597. To quote the chronicler: "Thus did the Regent at last overtake the Golden Chariot which he had pursued with so much subtlety and guile." Boris did all in his power to lull the people into a false sense of security in order to win their love and allegiance, but this he never succeeded in doing, and was "one rather obeyed than loved, being feared." He was always popular enough with the clergy and officials,

but the common people could not forget that their enslavement was due to a measure which had been introduced by him, and all the temporary benefits he could bestow upon them would never make up for their loss of personal freedom and liberty of movement.

The first two years of his reign seemed like an oasis in the desert of Russian existence, for Boris kept the generous promises made at his coronation, and did his utmost to be a real father and not a tyrant to his people. The nation had been able to breathe freely, and foreigners commented upon his generous rule, and, according to contemporary reports, Russia loved her crowned head.

Outwardly all seemed to be going well with Boris. His highest ambitions had been realized—surely he had every reason to be confident and at rest. The French Envoy describes him as “joyissant paisiblement de l’Empire, en plus grande prospérité qu’aucun de ses prédécesseurs.” What was it then that made him so anxious to be prayed for by the people?

Clouds were slowly rising on the clear horizon of the ruler’s life—the rumour spread that the Tsarevitch was not dead, but had been growing up in seclusion, and at last news reached the Tsar Boris that in Poland someone claiming to be the Tsarevitch was enjoying the favour and support of the Polish nobles and of the King. So persistent were the rumours as to the identity of this individual that Boris himself began to doubt whether there might not be some truth in them, and whether, after all, it might not have been a substitute of the real Tsarevitch who had actually died.

It was because Boris himself was not convinced of the truth of this statement that he now sent for the Tsarevitch's mother, of whom he inquired: "Is thy son alive?" "I do not know," was her reply. This so incensed the wife of Boris, in whom, for the moment, the blood of Malyuta Skouratov seemed to well up, that she swished a burning candle into the face of the terrified nun, and would have burnt out her eyes but for the intervention of the Tsar. She now confessed in a whisper: "I was told that my son was secretly abducted, but those who told me so are dead." Boris was greatly upset by this information, and commanded the ex-Tsaritsa to be securely guarded.

Nearer and nearer drew the danger. A story concocted by Boris in conjunction with the patriarch was now published abroad, namely that the pretender to the throne was merely a renegade monk named Grishka Otrepiev. This tale made little impression upon the people, and the anathema pronounced against that individual left them utterly unmoved. They were shrewd enough to realize that Boris was bound to promulgate some such story for the sake of self-preservation. The patriarch might hurl anathemas against *Grishka* as much as he liked—that could not injure the Tsarevitch, whose name was not "*Grishka*," but *Dmitri*.

Who then was he—this mysterious young man who, like a comet, illuminated for a short while the darkness of Russian history with unusual brilliance, but left in his wake wars and disasters?

Who was he? According to his own words to

Pope Clement VIII, he was "the son of the Tsar Ivan IV—escaped out of the hands of a most cruel tyrant—saved from death, delivered—by the special providence of the Almighty." This young man, once he had put forth his claim, never wavered, and both privately and publicly acted as though his claims were an incontrovertible fact. His own firm assertion of the righteousness of his cause convinced many of his genuineness ; others, though believing him to be a fraud, upheld his claim from motives of self-interest or from hatred of Boris Godounov. Many followed him from sheer love of fighting and adventure, while a few again saw in him a possible tool for the furthering of their own plans and purposes.

Even to this day it is impossible to make sure about his origin, or to fathom the mystery which envelops the early life of this gallant, courteous and generous youth, who spoke Russian with a slight Polish accent and Polish with a Russian accent ; who, although he claimed to be Ivan's son, was as different from any former Russian Tsar as was an active, valorous knight of the days of chivalry from an indolent Oriental potentate. Such was the mysterious adventurer who suddenly stepped into the limelight of Polish and Russian politics.

It was during the winter of 1603-4 that the Polish magnate, Wisniowiecki, recognized in one of his servants—a youth of unknown antecedents—the legitimate heir to the throne of Muscovy. There are different versions as to the manner in which the hero of the romance which followed revealed his identity.

According to that given to the King of Poland by Prince Adam Wisniowiecki, a young man in his service feeling himself to be dying, sent for a Russian priest, to whom, after having made his last confession, he said : "If I die, see that they bury me with honour as a Tsar's child." He refused, however, to give any explanation of this surprising statement, promising that after his death the priest would discover everything from certain proofs which he would find among his effects. Until that moment arrived he was to guard the sick man's secret religiously.

Despite this injunction, the priest imparted the news to his patron, who immediately came in person to visit the mysterious youth. Finding that he could elicit no reply to his numerous questions, he and the priest took the matter into their own hands and began to search amongst his possessions. Before long they made a find which to them was proof positive of his identity. The possibilities opened up by this discovery made the brain of the ambitious Polish magnate reel ; it tickled his vanity to think that the unfortunate son of Ivan the Terrible had sought and found refuge in his house. The young man inspired him with confidence, and his reluctance to disclose his identity until he felt the approach of death helped to impress the Prince in his favour. After the youth's recovery, which seems to have been a very rapid one, Wisniowiecki provided his former dependent, now the Pretender, with costly apparel ; placed servants, horses and carriages at his disposal, and treated him with honour and respect in every way.

He took him on a visit to his brother, Prince Constantine, where Dmitri made the acquaintance of his host's sister-in-law, Marina Mniszek, daughter of the Voyevoda of Sandomir. Prince Adam now also informed the king of his discovery, giving a full report of the following details which had been elicited from Dmitri. In the first instance he was saved by his guardian, Bogdan Byelski, who, suspecting an attack on the Tsarevitch's life, removed the boy, substituting in his stead another boy who was killed that very night by the agents of Boris. Dmitri for a time was entrusted to the care of a nobleman. Later on, he was placed for greater safety in a monastery ; but in order to hide his whereabouts he had wandered from monastery to monastery and finally, hearing that Boris had discovered the truth and was causing search to be made for him, he had been forced to flee into Polish territory. There in the Ukraina he entered a school, founded and kept up by the noblemen Gabriel and Roman Goiski, jealous adherents of a Unitarian sect. In their school free thought was propagated, and a great point was also made of physical culture. Evidently the riding, shooting, and other outdoor sports appealed to Dmitri more than the classics, for though he afterwards excelled in horsemanship, he never displayed more than a rudimentary knowledge of Latin. It was after leaving the Goiskis that he took the fateful step of entering the service of Prince Adam Wisniowiecki.

When the news of the Tsarevitch's reappearance became noised abroad, a Muscovite in the service of the Polish Chancellor came forward claiming to have seen the little lad in Uglitch, and when confronted

with the mysterious youth, he immediately identified him as the rightful heir by means of certain marks—a wart on the bridge of his nose close to the right eye, one arm shorter than the other, and a birthmark on the wrist. This decided any doubts there may have been in the minds of the Polish magnates, who were probably predisposed to credit the story. The news that the identity of Dmitri was thus established spread all over the kingdom, and the fact that such influential men as the two Wisniowieckis supported him, attracted to his standard large numbers of the adventure-loving Poles. They were moved, too, by interest in his pathetic history, and perhaps still more by his promises of generous reward should he come to his own.

Yuri Mniszek, the Voyevoda of Sandomir, one of the richest and most influential men in the country, and a *persona grata* with the King, proved himself of invaluable assistance to Dmitri. From the very start he had been taken into the confidence of the Wisniowieckis, who brought the young claimant to visit him, and the sudden and violent attachment which Dmitri formed for his daughter Marina fired the ambition of the Voyevoda. It was a unique chance for a Polish maiden to become the wife of a ruler of Russia ; he saw himself in imagination father-in-law of the Tsar, and became full of zeal for the cause. He made his support conditional on the promise that a marriage between Dmitri and his daughter Marina should take place immediately after Dmitri's accession to the throne ; that the new Tsar should pay all his debts, and provide him with means for the journey to Moscow ; that Marina should be presented with Novgorod and Pskov as a dowry, and lastly that

he, her father, should be appointed Governor of the principalities of Smolensk and Seversk.

From Sandomir Prince Adam took his protégé to Cracow to present him to King Sigismund. The Jesuits were exceedingly anxious to find a tool for the execution of their plans for furthering the Papal policy with regard to Russia, and therefore may have at an earlier stage brought their influence to bear upon the King to side with Dmitri. They made his personal acquaintance, however, only after he had been received by the King, whose hand he kissed in the presence of the most powerful Polish ministers. At this interview, in a few well-chosen words, the youth prayed the King to support his most righteous cause, and expressed the hope that his triumph might benefit Christendom in general and Poland in particular.

After this little speech Dmitri was asked to leave the council chamber for a while, and when recalled was thus addressed by the King: "God be with you, Prince Dmitri of Moscow. We, having considered your statements and verified your proofs, recognize in you the veritable son of Ivan, and in token of our sincere goodwill towards you, we grant you an annual allowance of 40,000 florins. Moreover, as a true friend of the Commonwealth of Poland you are at liberty to enter into negotiations with our nobles and to utilize to the fullest extent the help they are willing to afford you." In return for these favours Dmitri promised to comply with all the requests made to him, namely, to hand over to the crown of Poland the territories of Smolensk and Seversk, to build Roman Catholic churches in Russia, to admit the Jesuits into

his realm, to assist Sigismund to secure the crown of Sweden, and to do his utmost to bring about a union between Muscovy and Poland. It was as easy to make any number of promises as to make one, and he showed no hesitation in doing so.

It was now that Dmitri made the acquaintance of the Papal Nuncio Rangoni. This shrewd diplomatist, after instituting careful inquiries and getting into communication with a Livonian, a former servant of the Tsarevitch at Uglitch, had finally come to the conclusion that Dmitri's claim was a just one. In thus deciding he was influenced by the attitude of the Polish magnates, as well as by the appearance of uncertainty in a letter of Boris Godounov to the King with regard to the claimant. Accordingly when Dmitri visited him shortly after the audience with the King, the Papal Nuncio had already made his report to the Pope about the interesting young man. Dmitri's education in the Arian sect had apparently left him dissatisfied, and after long and serious conversations with the priests he came to accept the Romish faith.

The King of Poland now found himself in an awkward predicament. Only three years previously he had concluded an armistice with Boris, and therefore could not declare war against him ; but on the other hand he did not feel justified in preventing the legitimate son of Ivan IV from claiming his rightful inheritance. Thus the policy which he was of necessity forced to adopt was one of passivity. He allowed his nobles to take the part of Dmitri, but himself kept strictly to the letter of his agreement with the Tsar. This had been drawn up according to the terms of the Polish

constitution and, while it bound the King, it left his subjects free to make war on their own account and at their own expense. The support which he himself could give was therefore only indirect, by secretly favouring those of his nobles who came forward to assist the claimant, and by permitting Mnieszek to keep the revenues of Sandomir for the payment of the troops which rallied round Dmitri's standard, instead of paying them into the privy purse. No wonder that this kind of support was too vague and indefinite to please Dmitri, who soon became dissatisfied with his position at Cracow. He was burning to get at least as far as Kiev, even if he should be obliged to wait a while before entering Muscovite territory. Before taking a step forward he had, however, to overcome the opposition of certain of the Polish magnates, chief amongst whom was the Voyevoda Zamoyski, an enemy of the Jesuits, who did not hesitate to denounce him as an impostor.

In these circumstances Dmitri solicited Rangoni's mediation at the Papal Court. He was well aware that the Pope had always desired the conversion of Russia, and he hoped to gain the Papal support by offering himself as a willing tool for the furtherance of this end. He also himself wrote a letter to Pope Clement VIII, which contained the following passage—

“Most Holy and Most Blessed Father in Christ. Who it is that dares thus to address your Holiness, your Holiness will learn from the most illustrious and most reverend Nuncio at the Court of the Most Serene King of Poland, to whom I have communicated the origin and causes of all my resolutions. I have escaped

out of the hands of a most cruel tyrant, and the Almighty God has delivered me from death by His special and wonderful Providence throughout my career, even from my infancy, . . . and has led me into the dominions of the King of Poland where I have lived hidden and unknown until the time came when I had to declare my identity and appear before the King. After having been received by the King, and after having carefully observed the flourishing state of the Catholic religion according to the rite of the Roman church, I felt drawn to it and joined myself to it. I found by the grace of God an eternal and a better kingdom than the one of which I had been deprived by the extreme impiousness of a Tyrant. My anxiety for the salvation of my own soul made me realize the danger that menaces the whole of Muscovy by reason of the Greek schism which is in contradiction to the unity of the Catholic church, and how unjustified had been the authors and promoters of this schism in rejecting the immaculate and ancient doctrines of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. Therefore by the unmerited grace of God, who has given strength to my soul, without further hesitation I have entered into the unity of the Roman faith, I have become one of the flock of your Holiness, the chief Pastor of Christendom. . . .”

Dmitri left Cracow in April 1604, but before starting on his campaign he spent some three months in Sambor, the Voyevoda Mniszek's castle, where the conditions in regard to his marriage were definitely drawn up. He promised in the event of his obtaining

the throne, immediately to send ambassadors to King Sigismund to sue for his consent to the marriage, and to present to his father-in-law, apart from the grants already promised, the sum of 1,000,000 florins. In default of keeping these promises, Marina was to be set at liberty to claim a divorce.

At the Voyevoda's residence Dmitri found himself in the midst of luxury and of every kind of amusement. Hunting, feasting and music were the order of the day, and the young claimant, owing to his agility, courage and strength, appeared to great advantage in these surroundings. His courtship of Marina did not prevent him from pushing forward his military preparations. These could not be actually completed until Dmitri had won over to his side Zamoyski, the leader of the Polish army ; but finally, after a personal interview which Mniszek arranged for him with Zamoyski, he received the desired permission to start with his army for Russia. Dmitri had assured the Polish leader that the Russian people were ready to desert Boris at any moment, and that there was no doubt about their willingness to come over to his side ; also that secret agents from Moscow had come to him with assurances that the inhabitants of the capital would declare in his favour as soon as he appeared in their midst.

There seemed to be no reason for waiting longer, when suddenly an unforeseen obstacle blocked the way.

Ostrogski, the Castellan of Cracow, who had from the first been antagonistic to Dmitri's enterprise, now prohibited the troops from crossing the frontier.

This created for the time a deadlock. Every possible lever was brought to bear upon the situation—even the intervention of the Pope was craved. Dmitri protested that, for the time, at least, he would content himself with merely crossing the frontier and establishing there a base of operations. Then another incident occurred. The opponents of Dmitri's claim asserted that he was Grishka Otrepiev, a renegade monk, and, just before he set off, a man pretending to be the uncle of this monk made his appearance in Cracow and demanded to be confronted with Dmitri, whom he claimed to be his runaway nephew. The man promised that should he fail to identify him he would acclaim him as Tsar. The magnates, however, made short work of this interruption, for they had no intention of allowing their actions to be thus called into question by one who was not even armed with official credentials from Moscow.

The military preparations, so assiduously carried on by Dmitri's influential supporters, were now at last completed. It was time to start. At his headquarters in Leopol were gathered together gay Polish cavaliers in search of adventure, whose swords were ever half out of the scabbard, and large numbers of Russians who had become Polish subjects—the restless element of the venturesome South—and 2000 Zaporogian Cossacks. On August 28th, 1605, Mniszek officially informed Zamoyski of the opening of the campaign. Dmitri had already sent proclamations to Muscovy announcing to the Russians the arrival of their rightful Tsar and inviting them to come and take the oath of allegiance to him. The

5000 followers with whom he set out from Leopold rapidly increased in numbers. With an unerring instinct Dmitri made straight for Kiev, realizing how strongly it would appeal to national sentiment for the claimant to the throne of Russia to have made the "Mother" of Russian cities his starting-point. For Kiev was still hallowed by the memory of his ancestors, St. Vladimir and Vladimir Monomach, whose crown Dmitri intended to place upon his own head.

Three days were spent in Kiev and then the campaign began in earnest. After crossing the Dnieper, the army marched through the plains and forests of the Ukraina, until on October 31st they came upon the first Russian fort. The garrison, consisting of 700 soldiers, went over to Dmitri in a body, and on his entrance he was acclaimed by all as the Tsar of Russia. Thus at the very outset fortune smiled upon the adventurer. The fortified town of Tchernigov, to which he came next, stood out against him, but when at last, after a severe struggle and much bloodshed, it capitulated, Dmitri was welcomed into the town as "Prince Dmitri Ivanovitch, our Fair Sun," and the citizens thanked God for having restored to them their rightful sovereign. Leaving Tchernigov, he was greeted all along the route by people who came to meet him with "bread and salt"—the traditional sign of welcome to a sovereign—and all who carried arms swelled the number of his followers. On November 11th Dmitri approached the town of Novgorod-Seversk, where he met with his first serious rebuff.

The great Voyevoda Basmanov, who commanded the armies of Boris, succeeded in preventing the citizens from going out to welcome him, burnt down the suburbs, and several times repulsed his attacks. This discouraged the fickle Poles, many of whom left Dmitri, but their places were speedily filled by Russians.

The Don Cossacks now sent a special messenger to assure him of their loyalty. As a proof of good faith their messenger brought with him, bound in chains, the envoy whom Boris had sent to them with a sum of money to buy their loyalty. They, however, preferred to serve his rival. When led into the presence of Dmitri, the captive messenger of Boris immediately knelt down and acknowledged him to be the rightful Tsar. The man was of course instantly released from his chains, and subsequently proved himself to be a trustworthy informant with regard to what was going on in the capital, especially as to the attitude of the people towards the claimant.

The next attempt which Boris made to get over his difficulties was equally unsuccessful; for the assassin whom he hired to put his rival out of the way was himself caught and beheaded. Many towns threw open their gates to Dmitri; some of the Voyevodas voluntarily declared themselves to be on his side, while others were bound and carried into the presence of the Tsarevitch by their own followers. These captives were at once liberated, with the result that they all swore to serve Dmitri.

A new contingent, under Prince Mstislavski, was now sent against him. After a fierce fight it was

beaten by the forces of Dmitri. This victory, however, did not help to appease the discontentment of the Poles, who, disappointed at not getting the chances of looting which they had hoped for, left him in the lurch. For the moment fortune seemed to have forsaken him. He was attacked and defeated by the foreign troops in the pay of the Tsar Boris, and was obliged to flee to Putivl. Captain Margeret, a Frenchman, who fought against him, declared that this set-back was merely due to the inexperience of the leader and to the tactics of the Poles, who wasted men by making a concentrated attack on one Russian division and leaving the rest of their line exposed. This disaster, at any rate, did not injure Dmitri's cause, and one by one the towns forsook Boris and went over to his rival.

The victory of the Imperial arms enabled Boris to breathe more freely for the moment, but the defeat of Dmitri which had so elated the Tsar, had the contrary effect on the people, and it was their evident disappointment which convinced him of the fact that the nation was quite ready to throw him over for one whom they believed to be the rightful heir. What proof had he that Dmitri was really an impostor?

For three months Putivl served as headquarters for Dmitri, and this quiet little town soon became a veritable hive of activity. Despite his reverse he never lost courage—always behaving as master of the situation, he cleverly turned to good account every circumstance which might help to solidify his credit, and thus prepare the ground for the future.

In order to strengthen their belief in his cause, Dmitri played up to the religious sentiment of the Russians by sending to Kursk for its celebrated Ikon of the Virgin, and then publicly placing himself and his cause under its protection. At the same time, in his zeal for his new faith he gave the Jesuits who accompanied him every facility for ministering to the Poles, and for proselytizing the Russians in his following. But he also did his utmost to bring about a friendly feeling between the members of the two Churches, and Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests were often to be found dining together at his table.

During this period of suspended military operations, Dmitri set to work to improve his mind, for coupled with his desire for the wielding of authority was a sincere anxiety for the spread of education. He told his entourage that as soon as he should become Tsar he would immediately open schools "so that in my Empire people may learn to read, and write. I hope to found a University in Moscow; also to send Russians to foreign lands for study, and to invite learned and experienced foreigners to settle in my country, so that they may by their example create in my people a desire for education and a sense of shame at their own ignorance." The Romish priests who were in his suite hoped to take advantage of these generous intentions on the part of Dmitri, who, for his part, was convinced that the Jesuits might be most useful to him in this department. On one occasion he spoke to them in the presence of some Russians of his great desire for knowledge. He told them that he had come to realize of what

primary importance it was for a ruler to be versed not only in the science of war, but in all the other branches of science as well, and that in order to fit himself for the responsibilities which he soon hoped to assume, he desired them to become his teachers. The priests started him on Quintilian, but soon discovered that what he required was instruction in the rudiments of Latin. The reading aloud of Quintilian proving too tedious for him, philosophy and literature were taken up instead, and both Russian and Polish nobles were called upon to assist at the lessons which lasted for one hour in the morning and one in the evening. This instruction was carried out for three consecutive days only ; urgent business of state prevented its continuation.

At this moment a second attempt on the life of Dmitri was frustrated. The monks who had been sent by Boris to bring his dreaded rival's adventurous career to an end, were caught, but were afterwards pardoned by their intended victim. In their possession were found letters from Boris and the Patriarch Job to the citizens of Putivl ; that of the latter placing all Dmitri's followers under a ban, and that of the former promising them a full pardon if they would deliver up to him the Tsarevitch alive or dead. The fact that in both these letters he was spoken of not as Grishka, the renegade monk, but as the Tsarevitch, placed a favourable weapon in the hand of Dmitri, who when he found out that, for the benefit of the Muscovites, he was being anathematized in Moscow as Grishka Otrepiev, publicly produced the individual in question. Poles and Russians were



ZAPOROGIAN COSSACKS.

From the painting by J. E. Repin, in the Emperor Alexander III Museum, Petrograd.

thus able to see with their own eyes that, he who claimed to be the son of Ivan the Terrible was not one and the same person as the man against whom such furious curses were being hurled in Moscow. The presence of Grishka in Dmitri's camp, reassured his partisans on this most vital point, and before long even the Imperial forces which had been besieging his Cossacks in the fortress of Krom, took the oath of allegiance to him.

With his increased army Dmitri now left Putivl and went to Orel, where he was met by the representatives of Ryazan. His march from there to Tula was a veritable triumphal procession. Boris, getting desperate, sent an envoy to the Diet of Poland to demand the "extradition of the God-forsaken thief, the heretical ex-monk . . . and even supposing this thief to be in very truth the Prince Dmitri risen from the dead, he would still be the issue of Ivan's illegal seventh marriage, and should such an one reign over us?" In reply to Boris's accusations regarding the breach of the truce on the part of Sigismund, the Polish Chancellor answered vaguely that the King had no power to restrain individuals, and that those who had followed Dmitri were chiefly Cossacks whose belligerent nature was beyond all control. He also pointed out the fact that as the claimant was no longer on Polish territory it was impossible to hand him over.

In the proclamation which Dmitri now sent all over Russia, he urged the people to accept him as their Sovereign, assuring them that the blessing of peace could not fall upon the Russian lands until the throne

was occupied by the rightful heir. He told them his whole story, and how once when he had come in the train of the Polish chancellor on a visit to Moscow, he had had the painful experience of seeing the traitor Boris seated upon his father's throne.

While this proclamation was in course of circulation, the Tsarevitch occupied himself in business of State. He issued a formula for the oath of allegiance, and recalled the English Ambassador, Sir Thomas Smith, who was journeying to Archangel on his way to London with letters from Boris. This worthy Englishman had no choice but to obey. He was very graciously received by Dmitri, who entrusted him with a letter to King James, announcing his accession to power and promising to the English a continuance of the privileges granted to them by his father.

In Moscow itself matters were rapidly turning in favour of Dmitri, and Boris, like a veritable Job, received message after message of evil tidings. He succumbed to melancholia, and it happened that, one day, he died suddenly—two hours after having risen from the dinner-table in apparently perfect health. The rumour spread immediately that he had died by his own hand, and to this day the belief has survived that Boris poisoned himself.

His sudden death caused consternation and anxiety in the Kremlin. The very day after its occurrence the people were commanded to take the oath of allegiance to the late Tsar's widow, son, and daughter. Feodor Borissovitch, a youth of sixteen, now became Tsar, and astonished the boyars by his knowledge and eloquence

and by his humility and purity of soul. Indeed, the education so carefully bestowed upon this "beloved son," the training in statesmanship which he had received from his father, and the part which he had taken in administering relief, would have fitted Feodor to be an excellent ruler. "But Providence had ordained otherwise—the tree of Godounov was to be utterly uprooted." Dmitri's steady advance on Moscow rapidly undermined the position of the young and as yet uncrowned Tsar.

Soon after the death of Boris Godounov three of the leading boyars, the two brothers Shuiski and Prince Mstislavski, came to his rival to offer him their allegiance. Dmitri received them rather coolly, dryly remarking that they had allowed the Cossacks and the common people to take precedence in protestations of loyalty. These boyars were accompanied by Ignatius, the Archbishop of Ryazan, a Greek, who soon became a favourite with Dmitri, for his joyous temperament, toleration in religious matters, and love of all things Western were congenial to the Tsarevitch. He was appointed Patriarch in the place of the time-serving Job. This worthy, by this time, had also resolved to throw in his lot with the new claimant to the throne, but Dmitri dubbed him "Judas" and removed him from office. At last even Dmitri's most powerful opponent, Basmanov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial troops, went over to him, and before long a warm friendship sprang up between the young adventurer and the experienced warrior. They seemed instinctively to understand and appreciate one another. Dmitri recognized in Basmanov a man more virile,

capable and gifted than any other he had come across, while the Voyevoda perceived that Dmitri was able to put a right value on intellect, friendship and devotion. From being an antagonist, he became Dmitri's most loyal servant and most trusted adviser.

There were now two courses open to the Tsar Feodor—either to abdicate, as Dmitri had suggested in a letter, or to make a desperate effort to withstand his rival, but the young Prince did neither. In the inexperience and weakness of his youth he yielded to his advisers, who urged him to have the messengers of Dmitri caught and tortured. When the news of Basmanov's betrayal and of the surrender of the army reached the people of Moscow, there fell upon the capital a sudden and ominous calm—all the more suspicious because of the restlessness of the previous days. The foreigners in the city felt it to be the calm before the storm, and their hearts failed them. On May 13th it was rumoured that Dmitri was close to the capital—then there was a stirring in the atmosphere, a running to and fro among the people to buy bread and salt to present to the lawful heir as soon as he should enter the city. The rumour proved to have been unfounded, but its effect upon the citizens had thoroughly alarmed the boyars and the Godounovs. The soldiers were ordered to place guns on the walls of the Kremlin, but they obeyed very unwillingly ; while the populace sneered and scoffed at these military precautions, which were taken because it was believed that the famous Cossack leader, Korela, was approaching. Prudent citizens now began to realize the necessity of

hiding their valuables with all speed, for they feared the mob even more than the soldiers of Dmitri.

Basmanov's surrender had removed every obstacle from Dmitri's path to the throne—the remaining troops now took the oath of allegiance. “All the armies of Russia have surrendered to thee,” was the message brought to him by the boyars who came out to meet him. Dmitri disbanded part of his army, and all the soldiers who lived in the vicinity of Moscow were told to go to their homes but to hold themselves in readiness, as their services might be required for the cutting off of supplies from the city, should Moscow refuse to capitulate. The rest he sent on in advance to Orel. Acting on the advice of the Poles he did not himself accompany the great Russian army which had only a few days previously been fighting against him, but followed a few days later: On arriving in Orel the sound of bells greeted him, and the citizens met him with shouts of “Hail to thee, Tsar Dmitri Ivanovitch !”

The Poles warned Dmitri not to trust too much to this vociferous loyalty, and advised him to keep a strong guard around his person. Nevertheless it was not Polish protection which ensured his safety, but the genuine devotion of the people and their sincere desire to have a lawful Tsar to reign over them. A few days later he passed on to Tula, whence he sent messengers to Moscow to inform the people of his approach, and gave orders that a clearance was to be made of his enemies. On the 1st of June his envoys reached Moscow, but not daring as yet to enter the city, they made a halt at Krassnoye Selo, to which place the

people flocked at once, clamouring for Dmitri to come and rule over them. The envoys were escorted by the people into Moscow, where they were surrounded by an ever increasing crowd.

The boyars, coming out of the Kremlin, found it impossible to allay the oncoming storm—all they could do was to order the envoys to be bound, but instead of obeying, the people demanded to have Dmitri's proclamation read to them. This document was addressed primarily to the chief boyars. It reminded them of their oath to his father and told of his own escape from death. To the people it recalled to mind the burdens laid upon them by Boris and the fact that he had deprived them of their liberty. They were adjured to acknowledge Dmitri as their lawful Tsar, otherwise they would have to answer for it before God in the Day of Judgment. When the reading ceased, there arose a tumult of acclamations, cries and counter-cries, but the last vestige of uncertainty was dispelled when, in response to the cry: "Shuiski, where is Shuiski? He knows the truth, he went to Uglitch to investigate the death of the Tsarevitch," that boyar stepped forward and in a loud voice addressed the mob which, growing suddenly silent, hung upon his words in awful suspense. "Boris sent assassins to murder the Tsarevitch, but the Tsarevitch was saved and the son of a priest buried in his stead!" This was the climax! The pent-up fury of the mob burst forth in yells and howls of execration. "Away with the Godounovs!" they shrieked. "Let us exterminate them! Why should we show pity to them? Did Boris show pity to the Tsarevitch? Long have we sat

in darkness ; now is the sun going to shine upon our country ! ”

Forgotten were all the kind deeds which Boris had done. The same people whom he had fed and clothed and who owed their very lives to him, now burst into the Kremlin intent on the destruction of his hapless family, now with no one to protect them, for even the guards had forsaken them.

At this moment of supreme danger the young Tsar Feodor behaved with all the dignity of a sovereign. Conscious that there was no way of escape, he preferred to die on the throne rather than make any attempt to flee. So, when the maddened crowd rushed into the throne-room, they found him at his post with his mother and sister standing on either side of him. They dragged him out of the palace into the street, and all three were flung on to refuse carts and driven to the house where the Godounovs had formerly lived, there to be detained and kept under strict surveillance. Then every member of the Godounov family was arrested and their houses pillaged. With them suffered the German “doctors” who had attended Boris. The crowd broke into the cellars, and many of them partook so freely of the wine which they found there that they died from excess of drinking.

After ten days of terrible suspense the end came. The unhappy Imperial family was done to death—by the boyars, who probably hoped to please Dmitri by this act of violence. The widow of Boris was strangled with a cord ; the strong young Tsar fought for his life, but was soon overcome and then strangled ; his lovely sister Xenia, who had fainted from shock and horror, was

immured in a nunnery and there left to wither slowly—like a flower plucked from its parent stem, while the virile shoot had been cut off altogether. The murderers gave out that the young Tsar and his mother had committed suicide. The body of Boris was removed from the church where it had been laid to rest by the side of his predecessors on the throne of Muscovy. The remains of this once powerful Tsar, together with those of his wife and son, were given a suicide's burial, without prayer or service.

On his way to Moscow, the new Tsar was greeted on every hand by protestations of loyalty, and whenever the occasion presented itself he graciously addressed the people and made individual inquiries about them, with promises of favours to come. A halt was made at Serpouchov, where in a large meadow a royal tent had been erected and all preparations made for his arrival. Here he gave his first dinner-party to boyars, nobles and officials, and it was here that news reached him of the "suicide" of the widow and son of Boris Godounov. He expressed regret at this tragic event, and generously extended his pardon to all those who had been the supporters of the late Tsar Boris. At the next halt he was greeted by deputations of all sorts of humble folk : priests, monks, merchants and peasants came out in crowds to welcome him and bring him their offerings of "bread and salt." The expensive gifts presented to him by the richer citizens were graciously accepted by the Tsar, but none more graciously than the "bread and salt" of the poor. "I will be to you not a Tsar, but a father," he said in his kindly accents to the people. "I will love you," he said, "and will live

only to bring happiness into the lives of my beloved subjects."

A representative deputation of the boyars now came forward laden with rich gifts of costly robes, silks and velvets to greet their new Emperor and beg of him to take over his lawful heritage and to come and reign in happiness and security. They assured him that there was no longer any need for him to be downcast, but that he should be merry and of good cheer, for those who had sought to take his life were all dead and gone. The Livonian mercenaries also came to pay homage to him. They implored his forgiveness for the violent attack made upon him at Dobrynitch and for having defeated his troops on that occasion, pleading that they had only been doing their duty as faithful soldiers, and promising to serve him as loyally as they had served their late master. Dmitri sent for their leaders, and when they were brought before him, instead of chiding them as they had expected, he extolled their fighting qualities and praised them for their bravery and loyalty, saying that, if only they would serve him as well as they had served his enemy, he would place more reliance upon them than even upon the Muscovites. These kind words and the gracious manner which accompanied them, won all their hearts.

At last the day arrived for Dmitri to make his grand entry into Moscow. He rode on a beautiful and gorgeously caparisoned charger, surrounded by the Poles in full armour and by his boyars and other nobles, all decked out in their gayest and best, each rivalling the other in pomp and show. Joy-bells

were ringing all day long ; nature herself seemed to be in sympathy with the occasion, for the weather was fair and the sky cloudless. The wide streets were thronged, and even the roofs of houses and churches swarmed with sightseers. As Dmitri passed by, the people fell on their knees, crying out : “ May God bless thee ! May He who has so miraculously preserved thee, continue to keep thee in all thy ways, for thou art indeed the sun which has arisen to shine upon Russia ! ” With tender graciousness the Tsar made reply : “ May God bless you all : arise from your knees, but remember me in your prayers ! ” Just as Dmitri was crossing the suspension bridge over the river Moscva, a dust-storm suddenly arose, so violent that, for the moment, the people were blinded. The crowd, to whom this was a bad omen, crossed themselves, moaning : “ God have mercy on us ! ”

After the procession had entered the palace, Bogdan Byelski came out to the place where all the people had congregated, adjured them to give thanks to God for restoring to them their Tsar, and admonished them to be faithful to him. Then, pulling out the cross which he wore round his neck, he kissed it and swore a solemn oath that he whom they now hailed as Tsar was in truth Dmitri. He told them how, as guardian of the Tsarevitch, he had kept him securely hidden all these years, and bade them love and honour him now that he had been brought back to them. To this the whole assembly answered : “ God save the Tsar ! May God grant him health and happiness and bring confusion upon all his enemies ! ”

The coronation ceremony did not take place until a few days after the entry, as Dmitri wished the Tsaritsa-Mother to be present, and for this purpose she was fetched from her convent. The Tsar rode out to meet her outside the city, where crowds had gathered, eager to witness the meeting between mother and son. So much depended upon this, for the last vestige of doubt would be removed if she acknowledged him. When Dmitri came abreast of the carriage containing the Imperial nun, he instantly jumped down from his horse, while the lady quickly drew aside the curtain which shielded her from the public eye, and "the two embraced and wept upon each other's necks," to the intense delight of the people. Then the carriage drove slowly on, the Tsar walking beside it, followed by a joyous crowd. To the sound of joy-bells the nun made her entry into the capital which she had not visited since the death of her terrible lord. She took up her residence in the Vosnessenski Convent, where a suite of rooms had been prepared for her. The Tsar visited her daily and asked her blessing on all his undertakings.

Only a day or two after his entrance into Moscow an unpleasant incident occurred. The Tsar was informed that Prince Vassili Shuiski was trying to stir up trouble, that he had spread reports among the populace to the effect that the Tsar had permitted "unbaptized ones," as the Poles were considered to be, to enter the churches; that he was a tool of the Polish King and was set upon destroying the true faith. Moreover, the Prince revived the old

tale that Dmitri was the renegade monk Grishka Otrepiev. Dmitri, with a true sense of dignity, declined himself to deal with a matter concerning his own person, and handed the case over to the proper tribunal, which promptly condemned the traitor to death. Four days later the conspirator was led out to the place of execution, and his head was already on the block when a messenger arrived with a pardon from the Tsar. This generosity on the part of their Tsar delighted the people; yet it was owing to this magnanimous but unwise act that, less than a year later, Dmitri lost his crown and his life. He had merely spared the adder which was to sting him to death.

For some unknown reason Dmitri did not follow tradition and precedent according to which his coronation ought to have taken place in September, at the beginning of the Russian year, but to the annoyance of the people he was crowned on July 30th, 1605. In honour of the great event, however, he lavishly bestowed benefits upon the populace and recalled all those who had been sent into banishment during the reigns of Boris and Feodor. Special favours were showered upon the Romanoffs, and Philaret was made Metropolitan of Rostov. Even those of the Godounov family who had been banished during the first days of his reign, were pardoned and allowed to return to their homes. The young Tsar, in the full glow of his own happiness, wanted his subjects to be happy too, and was therefore anxious to be to them a just and generous ruler. On one occasion he was heard to say that there were

two methods of ruling—by harshness and severity, or by consideration and pity. He told his entourage that he preferred the latter method, adding, “I have sworn not to shed the blood of my subjects and I intend to keep my oath.” He was even fair to the memory of Boris, and actually reproved those who spoke evil of one whom they had themselves chosen to be their ruler. “You bowed before him while he was alive, and now that he is dead, you revile him !”

In order to ease the burdens of the people, all legal proceedings were to be free of cost ; to prevent abuses in the collection of taxes, the people were told to pay them direct to certain appointed centres ; all officials received instructions not to take bribes, and hereditary mortgages were prohibited. The Tsar endeavoured to alleviate the position of the peasantry by regulating the relations between them and the land-owners, who were to lose all rights over their serfs if they did not provide them with food in time of famine. It was also decreed that no runaway serf should be handed over to his master if five years had elapsed since his escape. Every trade and craft was thrown open to all—and the restrictions on travelling abroad were abolished. The Tsar, realizing the blessings of liberty, desired to extend its benefits : “I want there to be no restrictions, but that all may enjoy full liberty in my dominions which I hope to enrich by means of free trade—and may the fame of my Empire be spread abroad.” And so it was that, as an English eye-witness remarked, “he was the only ruler in Europe at that period to grant such a degree of liberty to his Empire.” In fact,

he instituted free trade in its fullest sense, abolishing customs and tolls, with the result that in six months' time trade was revolutionized, and articles which had been hitherto only purchasable by the rich now became accessible to all.

All those boyars whom Boris had forbidden to marry, in order to extinguish their stock, were now made free to do as they liked. The Princes Mstislavski and Shuiski at once took advantage of this and betrothed themselves to relations of the Tsar's mother. It was arranged that both weddings should take place immediately after that of the Tsar, and for days nothing was spoken of but feasts and marriages, and an atmosphere of merriment and rejoicing pervaded the palace.

It seems that at times Dmitri was almost too lenient and informal in his treatment of the boyars, who had grown up in such an atmosphere of abject servility that at first they hardly dared utter a word in the Tsar's presence without being specially commanded to do so. In spite of his free and easy manner, the Tsar knew well enough how to assume all the dignity of majesty when occasion required. He reorganized the Boyar Duma, calling it the Senate, and every day visited the council chamber where he attended to affairs of State. He listened attentively and carefully to all that his advisers had to say, but not infrequently, just after they had been laboriously laying before him their reasons for arriving at a certain conclusion, he would burst into a merry laugh and solve the problem in his own clear way, showing so much insight that they all marvelled at his judg-

ment. In fact, despite his youth—"he sat in the midst of his councillors like a teacher surrounded by pupils"—he often held forth to them on matters historical and political, fascinating them with his eloquence, like the born orator that he was. There were times, too, when he gently rallied his boyars on their ignorance and lack of polish, and suggested that they should travel abroad in order that they might acquire refinement and *savoir faire*.

Dmitri set to work with a will to improve the conditions of the people, and invited all, even the humblest of his subjects, who had any cause for complaint, to come in person to lay their case before him on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Thus, instead of their having to submit to the long, slow process of the law, he himself would see to it that their wrongs were righted. He also allowed the people to enjoy to the full those popular pleasures so strongly objected to by the puritanical Sylvester, the restrictions against which had never been removed ; for Dmitri was a merry soul and loved to see others enjoying themselves. He had no love for monks, whom he called lazy-bones and hypocrites, and, in order to utilize their superfluous wealth, caused an inquiry to be made into the properties of their establishments. He informed the monastic authorities that they would be permitted to retain only what was needful for their own upkeep, and that the rest would be devoted to a crusade against the Turk. "Let church property be expended on the protection of the holy Faith." He was always talking about this proposed crusade, and frequently visited the munition works where

cannons and guns were being prepared for it, and would actually sometimes lend a helping hand, indifferent to the pushing and jostling of the rough workers. Dmitri reckoned on the support of the King of France in this enterprise, the preparations for which also brought him into friendly political relations with Pope Paul V. As regards religious relations with the Papacy, the sincere zeal exhibited by the neophyte while still in Poland had cooled somewhat during his campaign, and seems to have died out altogether when he was surrounded by those of his own blood. He was reprimanded by the Pope for surrounding himself with Russian heretics instead of with Poles ; while, on the other hand, he excited the ire of the boyars by granting religious liberty to the Roman Catholics. "Why do you despise all other creeds?" he asked his boyars after one of those discussions on religious matters which he so thoroughly enjoyed. "What have you against the Latin faith—what against the Lutheran? Are they not just as much Christian as the Greek, for do not their adherents believe in Christ?" When, to justify their contention, the boyars referred him to the seven Councils with their binding decrees, he replied : "If there have already been seven Councils, why should there not be an eighth, or tenth, or even more? Let every man believe what his conscience prompts him to believe. It is my wish that in my dominion every one should worship God after his own manner." This desire to give equal privileges to all, did not, however, lead Dmitri to carry out the promise made in Cracow to the Jesuits. On the contrary, he even sent sub-

sidies to a Russian Brotherhood in Poland, the special aim of which was to protect the Russo-Polish districts against Roman propaganda.

His domestic life differed greatly from that of his predecessors, and he abolished various time-honoured customs. He could not endure the tedious conventionality of long repasts, and introduced the innovation of having both vocal and instrumental music performed during meals. Neither did he lie down after dinner for the customary three hours' siesta, but would go out instead for a walk, or to visit the gold and silver smiths who had their workshops in the palace grounds. Occasionally he would slip out by himself and some time might pass before his suite could trace him; whereas no former Tsar had ever attempted even to walk from one room to another without a grandee on either side to support him! Instead of driving to church in the customary manner, he preferred to ride on the most spirited horse he could get, and would quickly swing himself into the saddle without help. All this aroused a suspicion in the hearts of the boyars that he could not be of the blood royal. The great boyars also felt slighted on account of Dmitri's decision to wed a foreigner, for were their own daughters not good enough for the Tsar? At the same time the religious susceptibilities of the common people were wounded because the bride-elect was a "pagan," for as such they considered all Roman Catholics. Dmitri, moreover, was not careful enough in the keeping of fast-days and other rules of the Church, and was also very much blamed by the Russians for not pre-

venting the Poles from bringing their dogs with them into church, and thus defiling the sacred edifice. The fact that he differed in so many ways from his predecessors, the independence of his actions and his thoughtless disregard of national prejudices, planted in the minds of many people the seeds of suspicion that their Tsar was not a Russian at all, but a Pole. Dmitri's chief enemies, the three brothers Shuiski, made good use of this attitude of the people in order to foment rebellion, and carefully planned a conspiracy against him.

With regard to traitors, Dmitri imagined that the example which he had made of Prince Shuiski would act as a warning and a deterrent to others, and seems therefore to have been troubled by no sense of fear or insecurity. This state of mind was encouraged by certain treacherous boyars who feigned the most devoted loyalty in order to lull him into still greater carelessness. For a time, therefore, the Tsar went on in a trustful, unsuspecting way, but at last he began to realize that there was treason afoot. This led him to form in addition to the Streltsi a special bodyguard consisting of foreign lancers and halbardiers, in command of which he placed the valiant Captain Margeret, who had gone over to him with the Imperial troops. This famous Frenchman thoroughly believed in the genuineness of the Tsar's claim to the throne, and continued to uphold it after Dmitri's death in the report of his career which he drew up for King Henry IV of France.

These mercenaries were well paid by Dmitri and soon grew rich and were proud, but they served him faith-

fully and kept watch over him night and day. The fact, however, that he had so many foreigners in his bodyguard was another source of annoyance to the Muscovites. "Evidently the Tsar neither loves nor trusts us," they said, "and if it is like that now, what will it be when the bride arrives from Poland with all her Polish attendants? The place will then be swarming with aliens!" Unfortunately, Dmitri did not realize the force of this spirit of antagonism to the foreigner, nor how easily his enemies might turn it to account for their own ends. Owing to this and to the other causes for suspicion mentioned above, it was in well-prepared soil that Vassili Shuiski sowed the seeds of treachery.

Towards the end of April 1606, a great rising of the Cossacks took place in the region between Kazan and Astrakhan. They ravaged the country along the banks of the Volga, and spread the rumour that they had with them a young prince who called himself the Tsar Peter and claimed to be a son of Feodor Ivanovitch by his wife Irina. It was proclaimed that it was he who had been born in 1588 but that he had been kidnapped, and a little girl—the one who had died in her third year—substituted for him. The fact was that the Cossacks were merely using this as a pretext for robbing and pillaging, as they were bitterly disappointed with Dmitri for not giving them all the reward which they had demanded for their support of his cause. Captain Margeret relates that, within a short time, these lawless people had captured three Volga fortresses with the ammunition stored therein; after which the bulk of them scattered in different directions. The remainder

stayed behind in one of the forts for the purpose of attacking and robbing trade caravans *en route* for Astrakhan. When news of this rising reached Dmitri, he seems to have been impressed with the pretensions of the new Claimant, to whom he sent a letter to the effect that, if he were indeed the son of the Tsar Feodor, he would be heartily welcome to come to Moscow, and that orders would be given that all honour should be accorded to him on his way thither. If, on the other hand, he proved to be an impostor, the sooner he quitted the confines of Russia the better.

The answer to this letter was never received by Dmitri, as by the time it had reached Moscow, his own adventurous career had come to a sudden end, for dissatisfaction had been spreading rapidly; it is even reported that one of the Secretaries of the Duma boldly said to Dmitri's face: "No invincible Cæsar, no son of a Tsar, but Grishka Otrepiev art thou—a renegade monk, a slave of sin and a heretic."

Dmitri was very fond of sports of all kinds, and is said "to haue beene a resolute man of his hands, to haue delighted in fighting with the Beare, actiue and strong." During the week before Lent, he organized an expedition to a village six miles from the capital where a snow fortress had been erected by his order. His whole suite—princes and boyars—accompanied him and there divided into attacking and defending forces, the Russians holding the fortress against Dmitri and his Livonian corps supported by some companies of Polish cavalry. The ammunition was to consist of snowballs only, but unfortunately the Livonians did not play fair, weighting their snowballs with stones which resulted in many a



"COMING"—A MOSCOW CROWD.

From the painting by Ryaboushkin, in the Emperor Alexander III Museum,
Petrograd.

black eye for the besieged. The Tsar personally led the attack, took the fortress and, with his own hand, made the Voyevoda prisoner, saying as he bound him : " God grant that the day may come when I shall attack and conquer the Tsar of the Crimea in Asov and do to him as I am now doing to thee ! " After a respite, during which the opposing armies partook of a meal together in friendly intercourse, Dmitri proposed a repetition of the battle, but one of the boyars warned him that he would incur great danger if this were carried out, because the Russians were in a very bad humour on account of the loaded snowballs which had injured so many of them. The boyar also reminded Dmitri that there were sure to be some of his secret foes amongst them, and that whereas every Russian carried a long sharp knife in his belt, he and his party were unarmed. Dmitri wisely took heed to this advice and gave orders for the return home of the whole cavalcade. He soon discovered that his friend's suspicions and apprehensions had not been unfounded. It came to his knowledge that, had the second assault on the fortress been attempted, he and his men would all have been murdered, and that the traitors had intended to justify their act by pretending that the Tsar had meditated serving them in the same way.

Even the trustful Dmitri now began to apprehend danger. Captain Gilbert, one of the Scotchmen of his bodyguard, gives an interesting report of the suspicions aroused in the mind of the Tsar. He relates that : " Lying on his bed not long before his death (as hee thought, awake) an aged man came to the Tsar, which sight caused him to arise and come to me,

and his guard that watched, but none of them had seene any thing. Hereupon he returned to his Bed, but within an houre after he againe troubled with like apparition called, and sent for Buchinskie : telling him that he had now twice seene an aged man, who at the second comming told him, that though for his owne person he was a good Prince, yet the injustice and oppressions of his inferiour Ministers must bee punished, and his Empire should bee taken from him. In this perplexitie his Secretarie who was a learned and religious Protestant, gaue him good and holy counsell, saying till true Religion were there planted, his Officers would bee lewd, the people oppressed, and God Almighty offended, who perhaps by that Dreame or Vision had admonished him of his dutie. The emperour seemed much moued, and to intend that good which that Countrey was not so happy to receiue."

It was about this time that the Tsar received intelligence that his bride-elect was preparing to start on her journey to Russia. Thereupon he sent her 15,000 roubles for travelling expenses, and wrote to the boyars at Smolensk to receive their future Tsaritsa with all the respect due to her. They were to treat her as an honoured guest, as though she were himself in person. By his order the roads and bridges between the frontier and Smolensk and thence to Moscow were put into thorough repair, and all the streets of the towns through which she had to pass were well cleansed. On its arrival outside Moscow, her cavalcade halted in a meadow where a gorgeous tent had been put up for her use, and there Easter was spent. It is reported that the ardent lover came secretly to the

encampment to visit his betrothed, stayed two days and then returned to superintend in person the preparations for her state entrance into Moscow, which was to be carried out on a scale of magnificence hitherto undreamt of.

The event took place on May 1st, when an army of 10,000 men—princes, boyars, Livonians, Poles, Cossacks, Tatars and Streltsi, all dressed in brilliant attire, rode out to meet Marina Mniszek. The Tsar himself, disguised, rode up and down the lines, giving orders as to the disposition of the troops. He had already sent to his bride, by way of welcome, a present of twelve richly caparisoned riding horses with golden bridles, silver-gilt stirrups, and saddles covered with leopard-skins, each horse being led by a stately Muscovite. He also sent her a grand coach drawn by white horses and panelled in red velvet, with cushions embroidered in gold and pearls. Into this costly vehicle the bride was lifted by the Tsar's representative, Prince Mstislavski, and the procession then started for the capital. An eye-witness, a Dutch merchant, thus describes the entry—

“The Princesse shewed her selfe benigne and gracious, in saluting not onlie, all the Ladies of the Court, but also, in discoursing verie affably with diuers citizens' wives : and thus they advanced towardes the Castle, where there was an high scaffold set up hard by the gate, upon the which, a number of trumpets stooode, and kettle drums, making a wonderful sound, with the loud report of their instruments.”

The populace of Moscow looked on this pageant with amazement, and many viewed it with deep appre-

hension, for it was the first time they had seen armed men at a wedding, and they were disturbed at the sight of so great a number of foreigners riding in a body into their town. This feeling increased when, suddenly, just as the bride was entering the city, a great gust of wind swept through the streets, driving a cloud of dust before it—a repetition of what had happened at the triumphal entry of Dmitri. Surely this was an evil omen! Many a heart quaked at the thought of impending disaster and ruin.

According to the Dutchman, “The said Ladie Princesse was conducted to the Cloyser, where the Ladies, and Damoselles were resident, being the widdowes, and daughters of great Lordes, and Boyars of the countrie: and there was also the old Empresse, where she was to stay, and spend the time, till the day of Nuptiall celebration.” The pious nuns of the Vosnessenski Convent were shocked at the unseemly gaiety of the Polish ladies, and were horrified when the Tsar sent musicians to relieve the dullness of the place. Their feelings were also hurt by the refusal of Marina and her suite to eat Russian dishes, thus obliging Dmitri to send a Polish cook to the convent kitchen. The same writer adds: “The Russians enformed me that these ladies were there taught, and instructed in the articles of the faith, and the Russian ceremonies, and that the same lady Princesse was constrayned to doe the like, and that after this, she must be baptised after the Russian manner: but I rather suppose, seeing Demetrius frequented thither so daylie, and was there so privately that he taught her an other Catechisme: and so as

the entrie into this Monastery, was made on a Friday, so was her comming forth, incontinently on the Wednesday following." The Sunday after the bride's arrival, the young Tsar gave a great dinner to all Marina's relations in the new residence which had been built expressly for him; and also received the Polish Ambassador, who "brought with him, very goodly presents, the which he presented, the day after his arrivall: which were vessels of silver, guilt, with a great number of cuppes, and goblets, and two goodly horses, with a faire dogge: having delivered his letters of credence to the Emperour's owne hands, who receiving the letter, and perceiving, that upon the title of direction, there was not mentioned the title of Emperour, and Monarch of Russia, he presently reiected the said letter, and delivered it himsele to the same Ambassadour: whereupon the Ambassadour replying, answered, that his grandfathers, and predecessors, neuer pretended, nor usurped any such title, and that therefore, none was enjoyned, to entitle him otherwise, then by the name of great Duke; but if he did affect any higher stile then his progenitors, that then he should endeavour to conquer the Empires of great Tartaria, or attempt to subdue under himsele, the scepter of the Turkish Emperour, and then he would be acknowledged of all the world, for an Emperour, and Monarch. At which, so sharpe, and stinging an answere, the Vayvod, Father to the spouse, was mightilie astonished, and Prince Demetrius so enraged, that hee would have cast his scepter at the Ambassadors head."

On the Monday, the Tsar visited his bride, bringing with him still more costly presents and a large sum of money in gold ducats, but Marina, not knowing what to do with all these gold pieces, distributed them amongst her companions. To the surprise of everybody, the Tsar decided to have his bride crowned before the marriage, which would make her his equal—a Tsaritsa in her own right—a generous act which may have been prompted by his great passion for Marina, or what is more likely, may have been suggested to him by her ambitious father.

Life during the next few days was one continual pageant. Dmitri made the most of the opportunity to dazzle the eyes of the foreigners with blazing jewels and magnificent garments and articles from the Imperial treasury and store-houses. Never before had they seen such a lavish display, and it is little wonder that eye-witnesses of every nationality have described the events. In order to avoid her being crushed and crowded by sightseers, the transference of the bride from the convent to the rooms prepared for her in the palace was accomplished at night by torchlight. "Shee was conducted into the Castle, into lodgings verie richly hung, and the gallerie (through which she was to passe) was all covered with red, crimson cloth, and the hangings of the said chambers, were for the most part, of cloth of gold."

The day of Marina's coronation and marriage was kept as a general holiday, and large numbers of holiday-makers crowded into the Kremlin. Unfortu-

nately the day chosen for the ceremonials was one disallowed by the Church for nuptials, and it is strange that the Patriarch should have given his sanction to such a violation of Russian Church custom; but probably he, being a Greek, had no such prejudices with regard to the matter. It may also be that those who were plotting the downfall of Dmitri treacherously urged him on to make this and other *faux pas* in order to discredit him in the eyes of the people. Although he had chosen the wrong day, Dmitri punctiliously adhered to traditional custom in the matter of the marriage ceremony, and much to the annoyance of Marina, she was obliged to don the traditional national dress for royal weddings. This robe was made of cerise coloured velvet, profusely embroidered with jewels. On her feet she wore high-heeled boots of soft leather which were studded with gems. A ribbon of gold, thickly encrusted with jewels, was interwoven into her hair, Polish fashion, in such a way as to form a coronet. To quote further from the same Dutch writer—

“The espousalles were solemnized by the Patriarch in our Ladies Church, where shee was also crowned: The Temple round about, was hung with red cloth, with embroyderie of gold and silk, and the pavement was covered with the like.

“The Crowne, Sceptre, Globe and Sword, were all carried before the Emperour of Russia, and the Crowne, which was to be put on the Empresses head, was carried upon a cushen of red velvet: these solemnities continuing about the space of two houres, and thus they both went out of the church together, leading one

another by the hand, with crownes on their heads : on the right hand, the Emperour was led by the Duke Fender Ivanovitz Alsholsta : and the Empresse on the left, by the Duchesse, wife to the said Lord.

“The trumpets, kettle drummes, and all other musical instruments, made a great noise, and all the Court, was in festivitie, and joy. But in the ending, there was no great preparation, for it seemes, that the greatest triumphing, was betwixt the new married couple. Mony also was throwne abroad, when the coronation was solemnized, and Friday, which was the 9. of May, that is to say, the day after the coronation, and consummation of the marriage, the presents of the Ambassadors, and others of the court, should have been delivered, but it seemes, that this good Demetrius, who it may be (as having beene heretofore a Monke) was too devout upon his Breviarie, he said too long a Masse with his new mistris, in whose companie, he was so ravished, that he forgot to rise soone enough in the morning, and so shewing himselfe in publike very late, the same evening also there was no great banqueting at the Court.

“But on Satterday, which was a very solemne festivall day, so as the Russians kept it with greater reverence then their Easter : it vexed the Russians wonderfully, to see this day prophaned by their Princes nuptialles, but notwithstanding this, the Emperour, with the Empresse, having their crownes upon their heads, were set in a great hall, where first the Patriarke, and then the Boyars, and in the end, Merchants strangers, and other men of qualitie, entered in, kissing the new Empresses hand, and everie one offering of

their presents : amongst whome, was also your brother, and I, but I would to God we had kept our money in our purses, although we did it in hope, to have obtayned some privieledges ; this we did out of a good intention, according as we had before received many faire promises from my Lord Vayvod : but the disastrous end of all this festivitie, did in like manner frustrate us of our designes.

“The Sunday following, there was yet farre greater feasting, and the King of Poloniaes Ambassadour, made it knowne before, that he would not sit downe at the table, except they did him the same honour, which was afforded the Ambassadour of Russia, in the Royal Court of Cracovia, where he was set downe at the Kings table, and so he requested, he might likewise have his place at the Imperiall table, to which the Emperour would not in the beginning consent, but so he let him understand, that he should take his place, above all the Boyars, and great Lordes of the countrie : the which the said Polonian Ambassadour flatlie refused, so that at last, the Emperour permitted him to sit at his table, and so he came thither with his presents, which were far richer, than any of the former, and the banquet continued till it was late in the evening.

“In the retiring of themselues, a Polonian strucke a Russian such a blowe, that being sore wounded, he cryed aloud murder. But the uproare was presently pacified, and the two daies following, there was nothing but sounding of trumpets, and kettle-drummes, after the Imperiall manner. It was supposed also, that the guard of the Boyares should have shot off their Har-

quebuzes, and that the Artillerie and chambers laden with balles of artificiall fire, should have been discharged, in signe of ioy, the cannon was now drawne out of the Citie, and a fortresse of wood after the moderne fashion was built for an assault : but all this (as an evill presagement) was giuen over.

“On Wednesday, a day whereon Russians eate no flesh, all was verie silent, and still, as also the Thursday following, and by reason the Emperor had a little inckling of what was a brewing amongst the Russians, having alwaies his eare, and eye hereupon, he advised all the Polonians to stand upon their guard, commanding all those of his owne guard, that they should repaire to the Castle, with their harquebuzes charged, bullet in mouth, the match light, and in truth, there was to the number of 15,000 Muscovites, which were now in readiness, to effect their enterprise : but by reason that the Polonians kept good watch, and shot off many Harquebazadors in hearing, making a great rutte with their kettle drummes, the Russians durst attempt nothing : that present might, which might have served the other well, for an admonition, and fore-sight : as also they might clearely perceive, that the joy of this mariage sodainely ceased, and that all the time passed away, in an uncouth and dead silence, and the Friday after, there was none that would sell them any powder, or other warlike munition.

“In the meane while, the young Empresse passed the time merrily amongst her damoselles, in measures, daunces and masking, intending to have come the Sonday following, in a gallant mummerie to find out the Emperour, when he should be at a banquet, with

the Great Lords, and to present them yet further, with some new recreations, but all this was interrupted : for the Russians now plotted, to put in execution a designe, which long time before they had resolved upon : which was, the same Saterdag, being the 17. of May, according to the old stile, about seaven by our clockes in the morning. For this conspiracie to kill the Emperour, was projected before the Vayvods comming into the countrie, with his daughter they bethinking themselves long before, to entrap all the Polonians, which should then be there present, with their armes, and also because by the same meane, they would recover at that instant, all the treasure which had bin sent out of the countrie, to the said Vayvod, his daughter, and thus this tragedie began.

“On the same day, most terribly, the Boyars, with their servants being mounted on horse backe, with harnesse, and coates of male on their backes, having lances in their handes, iavelines, and darts, bowes and arrowes, cymitars and all other kind of armes, the common people running up and downe, with their steele mases, stockes and cymitars in their hands the number of them being so great, as it seemed, that the Myrmidons swarmed as thicke as haile stones, all the world ranne hastily towards the Castle, crying no other thing, along the streets as they went, but, to the murder, to the fire, kill, kill, making one another beleeeve, that the Polonians massacred the Boyars within the Castle, though verie few of them were lodged within the same : but this was done to no other end, but the more to fletch the rakehell vulger, against the poore Polonians.

“This uproare was so sodaine, that divers Russians, apparelled after the Polonian fashion, were slayne amiddist the presse, and incontinently, they belayed the Innes, and lodgings of all the Polonian Gentlemen, so as no bodie could either come forth, or assist one another, with their armes. They ranne in thousands towardes the Castle, where no resistance was made against them, by the Princes Archers, who were all Russians, and held correspondencie with the rest. And evill fortune went so hard on this miserable Prince's side, that where as he was wont to have every day, an 100 halberdiers, in a corps de guard, there was not now 30, no not so much as one Captaine to be seene, and yet if they had beene there all together, and performed their best, in defending of themselves, it had beene nothing against so great a multitude of people, but the slaughter, and butchery had beene so much the greater, besides the evident danger, whereto wee Dutch Merchants, and of all other strange nations should have runne into.

“The Russians therefore, cryed out to them of the guard, (so few of them as there were) that they should lay aside their armes, to come and ioyne with them, and take their part, and then they should have no hurt at all, the which they presently did, and willingly yeelded themselues, with their armes laid aside.

“The Russians then ranne up towardes the great Hall, with great presse, the above named Peter Basmaneuf going before them who was a very faithfull friend of the Emperours, and who, heretofore had a servant, who many times spake very evillie of the

Emperour, and defamed him, amongst the common people ; the same was he, who sodainely stroke his old master, in such a sort, that he died.

“The great troupe then ranne with like haste, throw the chambers, and even to the Emperours owne lodging, who hearing this tumult, leapt out of his bed, putting on his night gowne, and demaunding what the matter was : whereupon one of his household Russes answered, that he knew nothing, and that it might be they cryed out for some fire. ‘No, villainous traytor as thou art,’ said the Emperour ‘it is not for fire they thus crie out, but there must needs be some other matter in it, for all the belles, as well as the Cittie, as of the Castle doe ring alarum. Ah!’ saide he further ‘doe you think you have to do with an other Boritz?’ and so hee made himselfe ready, tucking up his shirt sleeves very high, and calling for his two edged Curtleare, which they were wont to carry before him, to lay about him, within on all sides, but he who had it in keeping, could not find it : and when he sawe the enemies troupe to presse forward, to flie upon him, hee requested his Halberdiers which were before the gate, that they would not thus yeelde him into the Boyars handes, shutting the doore himselfe, and so retiring within some other more inward chambers, even to the stuffe where he was wont to bathe himselfe, whither hee was presently pursued by his enemies, so that hee leaped downe out of a window, falling a marvellous height, uppon the pavement : for his lodging was in the toppe of the Castle, so as it was

a great wonder, that he broke not his armes, and legs, or that he was not crushed all in pieces.

“One of his Halberdiers, called Farstenberg, came presently downe the staires, and found him yet alive, but all his breast was bruised, so as he did nothing, but vomite blood, and his head was also all to be crushed and bloody. The saide Halberdier, with others helpe, carried him up againe into his chamber, where he was a little refreshed with waters and other comfortative drugges, while hee came a little againe unto himselfe, and then the Boyars had much talke with him, and interrogated with him upon some points, but it could never yet be well knowne, what passed betwert them. And to the end that the Halberdier might divulge nothing of such matters as had passed betwirt them, they presently killed him ; and afterwards they slew their Prince, with many cuttes and thrusts, and so they drew out his body, throwing it downe from aloft, and thus hacked, dragged it towards the market place like a dogge or some other vile carrion, leaving thus his stript and naked dead body, to the view of all the world, upon a placher or stage erected on high, till the fourth day after, and under him the body of his friend Peter Basmaneuf.

“There went every day thither great numbers of men and women, to see this hideous sight, and they put an ugly villard upon the Emperours belly, which they had found amongst the Empresses spoyls, and in his mouth the flute, with a kind of little bagpipe under the arme, with a peece of money of the valew of halfe a Pater, giving to understand by this, that for the peece of money hee gave them a hunts up, or fit of an old song.

“The popular sort in the meane while, forbare not to runne headlong up and downe the Castle, and into the Polonians lodgings, killing divers of them, and pilling of their houses, ransacking them in such sorte as they had not a shirt left to putte on their bodies. . . . The Lord Vayvod’s house, by reason it was environed with good walles, and had also a good guard within, was saved : the gates were well bari-cadoed without, to the end that no man might go out or fly away. I leave every man now to imagine, how this poore Princesse with all her Ladies and Damosels, were discomforted in their hearts : for she was presently robbed and spoyled of all her riches, iewells, mooveables, apparrell ; and even the cowches, and beds whereon she reposed, were taken away from under her : as also all the Lords and Polonian Gentlemen were robbed of all the iewels and presents that had before beene given them. True it is, that they within the towne defended themselves very valiantly in their Innes, but in the end they were driven to yeelde, and leave the boote to the others.

“The Lorde of Vituenetskie only saved himselfe, and his traine, and killed many Russes, though they had planted the canon against his house, and at last seeing himselfe hardly beset, he hung out a white cloth, in signe that hee determined to have yeelded, causing presently a number of duckats to be scattered before his chamber doore.

“The Russians ranne thicke and threefolde to annoint their fingers herewith, but his people issued out sodainely upon them, and so slashing and hewing on every side, they slue above an hundred Russes,

and made an open way for themselves to goe out, when in the meane while, divers Boyars of the Castle came, who tooke the said Lord into their protection, and drive out all the common people, so that in the end, all this allarum was appeased." The "Pogrom" had come to an end. It had been an unlucky day for all the foreign merchants in Moscow, and "many foreigners were murthered except the English who were in all changes liked by the Russians."

"All things had such lamentable issue, in this terrible daies worke, and the peoples crie was so dreadfull, the alarum bell ringing continually, and there being no end of slaughter."

An English eye-witness writing about the tragic end of Dmitri tells that "the old Queene denied him to bee her Sonne, excusing her former acknowledgement to have proceeded from feare and the general acceptance which he found amongst the people. . . . And then proceeding to a new Election they chose Emperour Vassiloe Euanowich Shoskey, who not long before was at the Blocke to haue beene beheaded . . . but the Emperour did recall him, and afterwards aduanced him to the chieftest place of dignitie about his person. He is the next of bloud liuing, descended of the Race of the old Emperour Iuan Vassilowich, of the age of fiftie yeeres or thereabouts, neuer married, but kept vnder during Boris time, a Prince of great wisdom, and a great fauourer of our Nation. This election was made, on the 20 of May."

In the hope of still further convincing the people of the futility of their loyalty to their late ruler, the new Tsar, Vassili Shuiski, ordered the body of

the supposed Tsarevitch Dmitri which had been hastily interred in Uglitch seventeen years previously, to be solemnly transferred to Moscow. As the corpse was found to be in perfect condition—always a sufficient reason in those days for canonization—the defunct little boy was proclaimed a Saint by the Church. If Dmitri's contention was true that another boy had been killed in his stead, then there is a certain amount of historic justice in this canonization.

“The 29 of May, Demetrius his body, was dis-interred, and drawne out of the Citie, it being there burnt, and consumed to ashes, and the multitude said, they would have it thus performed : alleadging, how it was to prevent the charms of that dead Enchaunter. For the same night after he was slaine, there was such a great, and wonderful frost, that all the corne of the fields was spoyled, and as divers verie old men also affirmed, in their life time, they never heard of the like, in so forward a season of the Spring. All their fruities and gardens were spoyled, and the leaves of the trees in the forrests, were so withered, as it was to be feared, that this would cause a great dearth of all things throughout the whole Countrie : all corne grew presently double, above the ordinarie prise, but the night after his bodie was burnt, it was yet a far greater frost, so that these barbarous, and infidell people beleieve, that in his life time, he was a great Nigromancer, but they should rathe have ascribed, to the great enormitie of their owne grievous sinnes.”

A long list of all the many misdeeds of which Dmitri was accused by his enemies was drawn up

and read to the people. The English eye-witness considered it a biassed report ; for he writes—

“Thus is Demetrius painted out by his Enemies, which perhaps were not altogether led with simplicitie of truth, but in many things made him worse, that they might make their owne cause (bad enough) to appeare better. They tell also of great Outrages committed by the Poles, (like those sometimes here in England by the Danes) their proud insulting ouer the men, rauishments of women, fetching them out of their houses and husbands bosomes to serue their lusts : neither did Demetrius, as they say, punish them ; one onely being sentenced, and hee violently rescued from execution by the Poles.”

Our Dutch merchant quotes the points of accusation in detail and gives as number eight : “Hee was greeuously accused to haue prophaned the sacred calling of vowed Virgins, in comming to the monastery of Nunnes where his wife was : and going to see them oftentimes, for hauing violated some of them, and amongst the rest, one of Boritz Fendronitz his daughters.” There is reason to believe that the accusation in regard to the Princess was not unfounded. That he made the daughter of his predecessor on the throne his concubine is the one stain on Dmitri's career. Yet one of the foreigners felt justified in writing of Dmitri as “not given either to women or drink : a man not unworthy of a better gotten, and longer continued Empire, which hee lost chiefly through the greatnesse of his minde, supposing that none of his Subjects durst attempt any such matter against his person, when as in the meane time the

practice went on with such a generall Conjuraton, that the Russes were summoned by the ringing of a Bell to bee readie to enter the Court, and to shake off that Gouernment which would have made them a more noble Nation then formerly they haue beene."

Why was it then that the people were so easily influenced to turn and rend the Sovereign whom they had so enthusiastically welcomed only eleven months previously? His unconventionality and thoughtless disregard of national prejudices, the favour that he showed to foreigners, his toleration of their religion and the presence of Jesuits in his entourage, may indeed have accelerated matters, although this might all have been lived down in time. The two powerful factors in bringing about his downfall were, the treachery and conspiracy of Prince Shuiski, and secondly, the arrogant behaviour of the Poles, to whom no Russian lady was sacred, and who conducted themselves in house and street as though the Russians were their servants. This was, of course, intolerable to the proud Muscovite nobles, whose indignation did much to further the machinations of Shuiski. That loyalty to Dmitri, although shaken, was never really uprooted from the hearts of the common people, is proved by their willingness to support the second claimant Dmitri, believing that the young Tsar had had another miraculous escape and come back again to claim his own. But was it really his own?

Captain Margeret concludes his interesting report to King Henry of Navarre of the events which he had witnessed with a clear statement of the reasons which had led him to consider as absolutely impos-

sible the tale spread abroad by Boris Godounov that the Claimant was Grishka Otrepiev. He also deals severally with other current theories as to Dmitri's identity, and it is interesting to note that Otrepiev himself is brought forward as a witness. Dmitri had been obliged to send this man away from Moscow to Yaroslav because his drunkenness and behaviour in general were creating a scandal. One of the members of the "Russia Company" then residing in Yaroslav told Captain Margeret that "when Grishka heard of the murder of Dmitri and of the accession of Shuiski, he declared on oath that the late Tsar had been in very truth the son of the Tsar Ivan Vassilievitch and that it was he who had conducted the young Tsarevitch into Poland. He swore to the truth of this statement and declared that he himself was the genuine Grishka Otrepiev, the renegade monk, daring anyone to deny it."

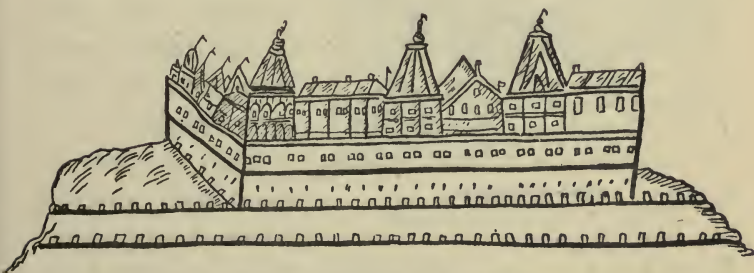
Not long after his coronation, Shuiski ordered a search to be made for this monk, "but what became of him," says the Captain, "I do not know."

The Frenchman ends his valuable narrative with these words: "I for my part, after carefully examining every point for and against the genuineness of Dmitri's claim, am convinced that he was in truth the son of the Tsar Ivan Vassilievitch the Tormentor."

Officially the False Dmitri is still stigmatized as a renegade monk, an impostor, of whom some say that he was an illegitimate son of the valorous Stephen Bathori, King of Poland. Whoever he may have been, he was a man whom the King of Poland received at his table, to whom two Popes indited

letters, with whom King James I of England was ready to have political dealings, in whose personality King Henry IV of France showed the keenest interest, and about whose short and brilliant career contemporaries wrote such accounts as supply material for romance and tragedy.¹

¹ For a fuller account see *The False Dmitri: a Russian Romance and Tragedy: Described by British eye-witnesses*, edited by Sonia E. Howe.



THE SMALL PALACE. BUILT BY DMITRI FOR HIMSELF AND MARINA, 1605.

CHAPTER XII

PATRIOTS ALL



NIJNI-NOVGOROD.

From a seventeenth-century engraving.

LIKE a cyclone, anarchy and civil war now burst over Russia. Nothing seemed able to resist the terrific onslaught which wrought such havoc as had never before been seen or heard of in Russia.

The uproar of those early morning hours during which

Dmitri and so many Poles lost their lives was but a foretaste of what was to follow. Now, war without was added to anarchy within, for the King of Poland sought revenge for the wholesale slaughter of his subjects. He invaded Russia and laid siege to Smolensk.

Prince Vassili Shuiski, who had instigated the plot against Dmitri, although he usurped the throne, tried to give a semblance of legality to his accession.

According to an English report he was "chosen by lot in this manner: The Nobles cast lots foure times to receiue a Successor, as it were, by diuine

sentence in lotoracle : in euery of which times the lot fell vpon Suiskey (for as some say, there were three or foure neerer then hee) he modestly refusing and enforced by constancy of the various lot to accept that Scepter ; whereof others thinke him as ambitious, as was modest Boris before him. Howeuer, he hath left his name and memorie written in as blacke inke as either Boris or Demetrius, if Reports bee true, which say that he proued a wicked Prince, partly by poison, partly by the Tartars, making away all, whose bloud might by Nobilitie threaten a probabilitie of their prouing his Corriuals. Yea, he is said to haue sent for Witches and Sorcerers, Laps, Samoeds, Tartars, or whatsoeuer other Nation yeelded such Hell-hags, incarnate Fiends, the Deuils blacke guard, to consult about his Empire and succession ; and (the Deuill is a murtherer) to haue sealed their predictions with bloud. Thus being told that one Michalowich should succeed, he is said presently to haue plotted the death of three Grandes of that name, his best seruants : yet the superstitious people obserue (after much chopping and changing) that in little time the State was settled on one of that Name, which still swaieth the Scepter ; Who then being a youth of no State-terror, was his attendant in Court and bare an Axe (after their custome) before him."

Although Shuiski scattered all Dmitri's followers he did not touch Margeret—in fact, he seems to have desired to retain the services of the gallant Frenchman, who, however, declined to serve the murderer of his late master.

The Tsar sent troops against the Polish invaders,

amongst them over 1000 English and Scottish mercenaries, who had come to Russia with the Swedish forces in response to his appeal for help.

“Sigismund King of Poland layeth claime to Sweden, as sonne to King Iohn (who is said to haue vniustly depriued Ericus of his life and Kingdome) whose younger brother Duke Charles first receiued his Nephew King Sigismund (then also elected and still continuing King of Poland) but vpon warres which after arose betwixt them, the issue was, that the Pole holds the Title: but Charles obtayned both Regall Title and Power, wherein his Sonne hath succeeded. Suisky takes hold of this difference, and Charles assists him with an Armie.”

The tide of fortune, however, turned against the Tsar; the boyars, too, sought to overthrow him in spite of the fact that they dreaded the increasing encroachment of Polish power, but they objected to the Usurper as much as to the Pretender. As a compromise and possible solution of the difficulty a certain party of boyars now decided to write to Prince Vladislav, the son of the King of Poland, to invite him to become their Tsar, but only on condition that he should first join the Russian Church. They argued that in this way the Empire would be saved from war and possible absorption into Poland, as the King would surely spare the realm of his son. An embassy consisting of some of the ablest men, both lay and clerical, such as Philaret and Golitsin, was thereupon sent to Sigismund who was, at the moment, besieging Smolensk. The King, however, had no intention of allowing his son to enjoy what he coveted for himself; it was his ambition

to make an end of Muscovy as an independent state, and to treat her as his ancestors had done to Lithuania.

Meanwhile a new Pretender had arisen, who, in his turn, claimed to be Dmitri. The people, with characteristic credulity, found no difficulty in believing him to be the young Tsar, of whom it was reported that he had escaped with his life and that someone else had been killed in his stead. Captain Gilbert, who knew the Pretender and "was by him entertayned," told his friends in Scotland that: "Hee being at Coluga received a Letter from this new Demetrius, so written that it appeared to bee of the former Demetrius his owne hand: and thus also he vsed to do to others being able to counterfeit his writing, and to relate such other particulars as seemed impossible to any but Demetrius to doe. Hereupon Captaine Gilbert went with his Guard of Souldiers to meete him and the Polake Generall which came with him. And whiles he was yet a good distance off, Ah (this Demetrius called to him) my true seruant, where were you and my Guard, when the villians hurt me? but if I had followed the counsell which you gave me such a time in such a place (relating the particulars) I had preuented them. This circumstance had moued him to beleue this to be the former Demetrius, had not he differed from this in person, as night from day. Thus also he said he affirmed to the Pole Generall, asking him how he liked this Demetrius, that This and That were as like as Night and Day (for the former was of goodly personage and this a very deformed wretch). The Pole replied, It is no matter, Captaine, this Demetrius shall serue our turne to bee reuenged of the perfidious

and bloudie Russe. And this Demetrius acted the other so neerly, and could so cunningly and confidently relate particular passages of past occurrents, that the Lady of Demetrius was by him bedded." Thus the attempts of Shuiski to make it evident that the Tsar Dmitri was really dead were after all in vain. Even Marina, under compulsion of her ambitious father, recognized the new Pretender as her husband.

This adventurer, commonly known as "The Thief of Toushina," was supported by the Cossacks, who hoped thereby to gain rich plunder.

Followed by this lawless rabble, he now threatened Moscow, which was in a sorry plight. The Poles within the city grew more arrogant and insulting, backed up as they were by a party of pro-Polish boyars : "Thus was miserable Russia ground betwixt these two Millstones, the pretending Demetrius and the superintending Pole," writes an eye-witness, for the foreign armies under the command of the Swedish general : "march to Mosko, which the new Demetrius and Poles held besieged, and put Demetrius into such feare, that not trusting the Pole, and fearing his Aduersaries on both sides, he stole away by night with a small retinue : and the Poles obtayned Articles of composition and departed. But miserable were the distresses by famine, fire, sword, rapes, and other outrages in other parts of Russia, caused by other Poles : and yet these but as a beginning and prelude to other following. . . .

. . . "Suiskey is helped not a little by the English, which brought him strangely and aduenturously powder and munition to his Castle to Mosko, which yet at last

by reuolt of the Citizens deliueers vp it selfe and him to the Poles."

After a troubled reign of four years, during which the people several times tried to get rid of the usurper, Vassili Shuiski was forced to abdicate. He was forcibly shriven and handed over to the Poles, who took the deposed Tsar to Warsaw where he was exposed to every indignity, and had to witness the unconcealed joy of the Poles at the downfall of Muscovy: "The Kings and princes of Polland, always enymies of the Moscovettes, takes now advantage . . . of a wonderful confused estate . . . in Moscow and prepares an army to keepe possession of the Crown and country. . . ." Foreign eye-witnesses were deeply impressed by the misery of Russia, and one of them—an Englishman—moved with pity and horror, writes: "Thus have we seen the Russians sciones utterly rooting up so many Russian Imperial families and persons; the whole family of Iuan extirpate that of Boris succeeding—annihilate; Lord pretending Deme-try and Suiski extinct; and yet have we greater abominations to shew you. No Tyrant, no Serpent, no Dragon is so exorbitant and prodigious as that which hath many heads—therefore in diuine Visions Monarchies (howeuer excessive and tyrannical) haue beene resembled by simpler, more uniforme beasts. . . . And now has Russia a Monster of many heads, that is, a bodie fallen into many pieces. The man possessed of the wife of that double Demetrius, got to Astracan, there seating himselfe to set up an usurped shop of Rule; the Southerne parts chose Prince Vladislaus, son of King Sigismond of Poland; those of

the North thought of other princes . . . and at last a popular government happened, or if you will, a confusion of the multitude bare sway, which killed and murdered every great man, whom any Rascall would accuse to be a friend of the Poles, or to any of the dead Emperors whom these popular injudicious Judges fancied not. And now Russia blushed with impotencie, that is with the shameless sight of the daily effusion and profusion of her best blood ; and euery man was an actor and oh that they had beene but Actors ! too really did they present (not represent) bloudie Tragedies of which their whole country was become the theatre, the Devil the Choragus (a murderer from the beginning) and the whole world spectator, stupid with admiration, quaking with horror of so uncouth a sight." It was when matters had arrived at this pitch that a voice was raised in protest—and this voice carried weight. It was that of the Patriarch Hermogen of Moscow.

This man of iron will and unbending severity, but of acknowledged integrity and piety, refused to recognize the Polish Prince Vladislav as Tsar unless he became a member of the Russian Church, for to Hermogen the Latin faith was anathema ; although some boyars were willing to waive the condition, he threatened with excommunication any Russian who should acknowledge the Prince as Tsar. It was due to his refusal to accept and bless a Roman Catholic ruler that matters regarding the succession had not been settled. The Poles hated him for frustrating their plans, and so did the boyars, who deeply resented the unbending attitude of the masterful prelate. On

one occasion the irate Boyar Saltykov, drew knife against Hermogen, who remained quite calm in the assurance of being "armed with the Cross," as he expressed himself. The Patriarch, however, without delay, commanded the people to gather the next day in the cathedral, as he intended to address them ; and, in spite of every attempt of the Poles to keep the populace away, many managed to hear their Patriarch's impassioned appeal to "arise, protect the faith, and pass on this resolution to the other towns." The fearless priest was thereupon put under arrest and strictly guarded.

His appeal, however, had not been uttered in vain, and one of the first to respond was Prokopie Lyapounov, a member of one of those old princely families which in course of time had lost their lands and even their titles. This true-hearted patriot had withdrawn his support of the Polish Prince as soon as he had realized the intended treachery of the King and the danger to his beloved country. In response to the Patriarch's call he now gladly put himself, his wealth, his great influence in Ryazan, and his men at the service of Hermogen. Lyapounov possessed great gifts of leadership, and was able to sway the masses by his impassioned oratory. The appeal for a national levy in order to drive out the enemy was written out by him, together with a description of the awful condition of the people of Smolensk, whose country was being ravaged by the Poles. To this he added in his own words—

"Let us bravely arise and let us put on the whole armour of God and let the whole country unite to drive

the enemy out of Moscow—then let us take counsel with all true believers of the Muscovite Empire as to who shall be our ruler. If the King of Poland consents to have his son baptised into the true faith and agrees to his becoming our Tsar, and if he will withdraw all the Lithuanian troops from Russia and his army from Smolenck, then shall we be willing to swear fealty to the Tsar Vladislav Sigismondovitch and to be his faithful servants, but if King Sigismond refuses to accept these our conditions then let us stand up and defend the true faith and fight for the Russian lands. We must be animated by one idea—to uphold our orthodox faith or to die one and all in the attempt.”

Copies of this document were sent to every town, with the result that the smouldering hatred against Poland burst out into flame. Messengers were despatched to collect recruits from the surrounding country. Church bells called the people together; everyone brought what he could in the way of weapons—in every part people gathered together and passed resolutions to be true to the faith and to Muscovy, not to take the oath of allegiance to the Polish King, nor to have any dealings with his Russian supporters. It was decided that they should all join together and march against Moscow to deliver it from the Polish domination. They agreed not to create any unnecessary disturbances, not to harm in any way the Russian people, and to protect and stand by any who might be harmed or punished by the Moscow boyars, and to live in unity with one another.

This rising spread from place to place, and men came from far and near to rally round the standard of

Lyapounov. Unfortunately, in his impetuous zeal, he accepted the help of Zarouski, the Cossack leader, whose motive was not patriotism, but merely the desire to fish more advantageously in troubled waters.

In January the appeal had been issued, and in March a troop of armed citizens approached the capital. When this became known in Moscow the infuriated boyars and Poles sent to the Patriarch, the prime instigator of this rising. The Boyar Saltykov indignantly expostulated with him, saying: "Behold the result of thy letter to the towns! the militia are approaching the capital. Write immediately and forbid them to come." To this the Patriarch courageously replied: "As soon as all ye traitors and all the Polish troops have left the town, I will write to them to withdraw, but if you remain I will urge them to persist in their undertaking."

It was Tuesday in Holy Week—apparently everything was as usual in Moscow, except for the vast number of carts which were being driven into the town, ostensibly bringing goods to market. Presently the Poles, suspecting that they might be intended for barricades, ordered the drivers to carry up guns to the Kremlin, which they refused to do. Then the riot broke out—Moscow arose to a man. The Poles in their fury slaughtered everyone they could lay their hands on. They pillaged churches and houses so effectually that men who a few days previously had been clothed in rags, now donned gold embroidered robes; so plentiful did pearls become that the Poles are said to have loaded their guns with them. Nearer and nearer to the city drew the National Army.

Realizing that their numbers were insufficient to withstand such a combined onslaught, the Poles resorted to the desperate measure of setting fire to the outer ring of the town. In Kitaigorod they murdered all the Russian men and gambled for the beautiful women and children, and three days later, all but the Kremlin and Kitaigorod were a heap of ashes.

Under the threat of a cruel death the Patriarch was commanded to write to Lyapounov to withdraw with his people, but this left Hermogen quite unmoved. "You threaten me with a shameful death," he replied, "but I hope through this to gain the crown of eternal life ; it has always been my desire to be permitted to suffer for righteousness' sake, and I have already once told you that I refuse to comply with your demands and therefore will not write according to your will. This is my last word in the matter !" Thereupon he was incarcerated in a cell of the Tchoudov Monastery and subjected to every kind of indignity.

For four months the Russian Army besieged Moscow, but then unfortunately quarrels broke out among the leaders. Lyapounov objected strongly to the lawlessness displayed by the Cossacks, who in their turn resented his strict discipline ; on one occasion twenty-eight Cossacks who had done deeds of violence were drowned by his orders. There was also some overlapping of authority, as both Lyapounov and Zarouski had held command.

Thus the whole Cossack Army rose against Lyapounov, who thereupon decided to withdraw, but the National Army fetched him back. News of these dissensions reached the commander of the Polish troops, and an

intrigue against the Russian patriot was now planned and successfully carried out. Gonscévski wrote a letter purporting to have been written by Lyapounov, whose signature he had cleverly forged. This letter he allowed to fall into the hands of the Cossacks, who were incensed at reading that it was the intention of the Russian leader to have them all killed as soon as the Kremlin was taken. The unsuspecting man was confronted by the Cossacks, who asked him whether the signature was his and whether he had written the letter. Quietly, and in a dignified manner, Lyapounov told them that the signature was strangely like his, but that he had no knowledge of this document. Accused by the Cossacks of lying, the noble victim of a base intrigue found an unexpected defender in a certain Rsjevski, a personal opponent, who, nevertheless, now stood up for Lyapounov's honesty, which he declared was beyond doubt. Both the accused and the defender were, however, done to death by the lawless Cossacks.

On the murder of their leader, a general demoralization of the troops set in: the majority of the people who had followed the Patriarch's call returned to their homes, while those who did not desert continued the siege of Moscow under the leadership of Prince Troubetzkoi. Many, however, formed themselves into bands of robbers and began to raid the country.

The Muscovite ambassadors in the camp of King Sigismund were made prisoners and sent into Poland. Finally the siege of Smolensk, which had lasted two years, came to an end, for the people of Smolensk, unable to endure any longer the horrors of the siege, burned their town and themselves with it. It seemed

as if there were no longer any escape for Russia from absorption into Poland. Darkness and gloom, anarchy and war, reigned supreme. These conditions Sweden utilized in order to secure for herself at least a part of Russia, and Novgorod was therefore attacked by a Swedish force. At the same time a third Pretender appeared, claiming to be Dmitri, and him the citizens of Pskov recognized as Tsar.

Thus the crowned Tsar Vassili was a prisoner among the Poles, two Pretenders were claiming his crown, and the King of Poland's son was the candidate of the Boyar party whose recognition was contingent on his change of creed. To add to these political complications, Tatars invaded the country and the Tcheremiss in Eastern Russia were rising in revolt, and throughout the land marauding robber bands were terrorizing the population, who were also exposed to the savagery of the Polish troops, more than half of which were German mercenaries. Conditions were truly awful and the Muscovite people in a terrible plight. In winter matters grew still worse, for numberless people, robbed of their homes, now froze to death along the wayside. A Russian contemporary thus describes the conditions : "It was such a manifestation of the terrors of the wrath of God that mankind could hardly dare hope for deliverance. Nearly the whole Russian land is devastated. This period of terror can only be called the Great Tribulation, for the misery of the Russian people was as it had never been since the day of creation."

Who was to help them? Who to stand by them or to deliver them from the hands of their enemies?

When all hope seemed lost and Muscovy on the verge of total ruin, succour was approaching. In the Troitsa Sergei Monastery ruled the Archimandrite Dionissi, friend and fellow-worker of the Patriarch Hermogen. These two friends differed greatly in temperament: Hermogen was quick-tempered, severe, sharp, suspicious and very often dissatisfied with men and matters, and lacking in graciousness of manner; Dionissi, on the other hand, was kind and gentle, never ruffled, good-natured and full of charm. Yet both were upright, honest, God-fearing men and passionate patriots, and united to each other by a strong bond of personal love.

The Archimandrite was renowned for his works of charity and mercy. He knew only too well how terribly the people were suffering; starved, naked, almost frozen, men, women, and children fled for refuge to the great monastery, where they were clothed and fed. Many a tortured man would crawl to that sanctuary there to find relief for his excruciating sufferings, for flayed backs, burnt-out eyes, and other horrors perpetrated by the mercenaries or the Poles, were common occurrences. The good Archimandrite turned part of his monastery into a hospital and built several others in villages under his jurisdiction, and also established hostels for the homeless people where his poor suffering flock could be tended—some back to health, others until they died; but at least they were cared for, and then received Christian burial. Dionissi himself saw to everything, and while he and his monks lived on water and bread, the sick and needy were fed with fresh food. He administered medicine to the

sick and the sacrament to the dying, and neither night nor day did he give himself any rest.

He ordered his monks to search for the homeless sick, many of whom died from exposure in forest and field, for wherever the Poles passed through on their foraging expeditions they burned all the cottages. Within thirty weeks the monks thus brought the corpses of over 3000 hapless Russians to the monastery, where they were reverently buried. In one village alone were buried in one day 860 corpses.

Services of intercession for the deliverance of the country were held continuously by his orders, and letters of encouragement or of admonition were written by him to the warriors before Moscow and to various cities to urge them to keep up the supply of men and means.

The Archimandrite, however, was not only a good and pious, but also a clever man. He realized where the cause of the terrible conditions lay and what was required to deliver his nation from doom ; so far as in him lay, he intended to work towards this end. He therefore composed a letter to the nation, which was copied many times by the monks, and the copies were then given to the people who, from all parts of the country, visited the sanctuary of the famous monastery—

This "Gramota," or writing, was a call to prayer and to repentance and sacrifice, lest a worse fate should befall the nation. It was an appeal for help to the other parts of the Empire to come to the rescue of the heart of the country—Moscow. He called upon them to repent and to unite in whole-hearted prayer, and he

also called upon them to take up arms. He pleaded for a cessation of all party strife, urging the leaders to forego their private quarrels until such time as the enemy had been expelled from Russia. In lurid colours he described the awful conditions of the neighbourhood of Moscow and Smolensk, and warned the other cities that unless they united and drove the Poles away, their fate would be as terrible ; they were not to let themselves be lulled into a false belief of security, because of the distance of their town from the ravaging hosts of the enemy. He pleaded with them as faithful Christians to protect the sanctuaries and to fight manfully for their faith and country, to trust in God, to obey Him, and to vow not to rest until the work of driving out the cruel foe was accomplished. Surely then the Almighty would turn away His displeasure and His well-deserved wrath, save them from cruel death, and deliver Russia from the yoke of the Roman Catholic Poles.

This letter put fresh heart into the people, and the national spirit, which was well-nigh quenched, began to revive. The campaign against the Poles had not died out with Lyapounov's death, but it lacked cohesion and had degenerated into a guerilla warfare. Still the towns kept up communication with each other, one encouraging another to do its best for faith and fatherland. The clergy, too, played their part valiantly ; they called upon the people to repent of their sins, and by their zeal infused hope and confidence. In spite, however, of these efforts to carry on the rising, there was no plan of defence or offence, and waste of energy, means and time was

apparent everywhere ; in fact there was utter disorganization.

Among the cities to which a copy of the Archimandrite's letter had been sent was Nijni-Novgorod, and there the Voyevoda called together the leading citizens to hear the appeal and consider what to do. The Starosta, or elder of the Council, Minin, a butcher by trade, but who had once been a soldier, suggested that the letter should also be read in church to the whole people, and "then let us see what God will direct us to do." As to himself, he had seen a vision of St. Sergei Radonejski who appeared to him, saying : "Arouse those who are sleeping !" His suggestion was accepted, and the next day the big bells of the cathedral called the people together and to the assembled multitude the letter was read. They heard in how sore a plight Moscow was and in what danger the whole country lay. Then the people exclaimed : "There is no hope for us, greater evil is still sure to fall upon us !" and, groaning, they called out : "Woe unto us ! Woe unto us !" Later on, many citizens who were moved to horror and pity gathered outside the church to discuss the position. It was then that their fellow-citizen, Minin, butcher and cattle-driver, stepped forward and addressed the crowd in these brave words : "Fellow-believers, let us save the Muscovite Empire and let us sacrifice for that our possessions. If we are to save the Empire we must forget our personal comfort and consider the national welfare first and foremost. Let us sell our goods and houses, let us pawn our wives and children, in

order to raise money. Let us also select someone to be our leader and then let us courageously go ahead. True! it is a great undertaking, but we shall be able to carry it out if God is with us! Consider what great fame we shall acquire if from such a small town as ours such a great deal will be accomplished. We will deliver Russia, but not we alone; for as soon as the other cities hear what Nijni-Novgorod has decided upon, they will follow our example."

Spellbound the people listened to the glowing words of the man who had seen the vision and who was already doing what he had been bidden to do. Several times he had to speak to crowds who wanted to hear for themselves what Minin had to say. He succeeded in awakening the people of Nijni-Novgorod from their slumber of selfishness and false security to the need of their country. The result of it was that at last the people called out: "Let Kosma Minin be our leader and we will give ourselves absolutely into his hands."

Minin was a wise man; he told them that it was a military leader they needed. Where to find one, however, was the difficulty, for most of the nobles were discredited in the eyes of the people by having supported pretenders and usurpers, as well as the Poles.

After careful deliberation it was at last decided to invite Prince Dmitri Pojarski to accept the leadership of the people who were to form themselves into a National Army.

This Prince Pojarski, although of ancient lineage

was now merely a country squire ; but his record was clean and honourable and he had been one of the first to follow Lyapounov's call for help to the nation. In the furious attack against Moscow, he had been one of the first to get into the burning city, but owing to the fire was forced to retire. He was wounded, but had been rescued by his men and taken to his country estate, where he had since been recovering from his injuries. A deputation consisting of the Archimandrite, of the nobleman Boltin, and representatives of the citizens, was sent at once to him, for Minin knew how to strike while the iron was hot. He feared the fickleness of the crowd and decided upon immediate action. The unambitious country squire was at first taken aback by the request to put himself at the head of the nation—for it amounted to that ; for the sake of the people, however, and seeing the urgency of the cause, he agreed to come and do his best—"to give his life for the true faith."

He told the deputation that he required a helper in this great undertaking—some good, true, and business-like citizen who should be in charge of the war-chest, and who should get the money as well as pay the troops ; in fact, organize the national resources, while he himself saw to the levying and training of the men. This seemed only a reasonable request, and when Prince Pojarski suggested that Minin, the butcher, should occupy this position, they were greatly pleased, for thus the people's and the leader's choice had fallen on one and the same man.

On their return to Nijni-Novgorod the deputation

informed the waiting people of the decision, and Minin was at once asked to be the manager of the War Finances. This clever and shrewd man foresaw that his task would be a difficult one, and that to wield authority with power, it would not do to accept the honourable but arduous position too readily; therefore only after a general meeting of the populace had elected him unanimously, did he accept the position. To insure himself against future difficulties and rebellion he demanded that all the people present should affix their signatures to a declaration in which they were to promise unconditional obedience to Prince Pojarski and to himself: also that they would arm themselves or bring money with which to pay the troops. "If you fail to do this sufficiently well, rather than let the troops suffer lack, I will confiscate your possessions, your wives and your children I will give into servitude." The citizens agreed to these drastic measures, and Minin, who fully realized the urgency for hurrying on matters, set to and quickly organized a general scheme of taxation. He immediately appointed a special body of assistants. No one was exempt, not even Church property or monasteries—all alike had to give a fifth of their possessions; those who had no money had to sell up their property. Nor were the poor to escape. Rich men had to lend money to the poor in exchange for their services, or those of their wives and children; and thus the rich were doubly taxed, as only they could buy property or take labourers.

The people, however, soon began to groan under the iron measures of their Financial War Dictator,

and the poor especially suffered as they came into subjection to the richer members of the community. The exceptional occasion, however, demanded exceptional measures—the existence of the Empire, yea of the nation, was at stake, and individuals could not be considered. Many, indeed, gave voluntarily much more than the obligatory fifth, and one woman, a widow, who had saved 12,000 roubles, sent 10,000 towards the cause.

Everything was soon organized, and to everybody tasks were allotted ; powder and weapons were prepared, and the women set to and baked rusks for the troops. In fact, it was a general mobilization. Some had to stay behind and guard the cities, while others had to join the Field Army.

Prince Pojarski composed a letter in the name of the people of Nijni-Novgorod, copies of which were sent to other cities, where the town-crier called the people together, and in the churches this appeal to mobilize and to give of their substance was read to the assembled congregations. "Let us unite and with the assistance of the All Merciful God go against Poles and Lithuanians, and faithfully consider the welfare of our Fatherland and not acknowledge either Vladislav or the King of Sweden as our Ruler, nor any other foreigner." In most cases an eager response was given and bodies of armed men began to flock to Nijni-Novgorod. There Pojarski himself paid for their keep and Minin paid wages according to what he considered a man's services were worth. All, however, who possessed private means refused to accept pay, and thus only the hired troops received wages.

While these military preparations were going on, the clergy were encouraging the people, and public services for confession of sin and for intercession were being held everywhere. The Troitsa Monastery sent out a steady flow of letters and appeals reiterating the urgency for the nation to unite, to arise, and to drive away the enemy.

When the Poles and boyars in Moscow heard of the action of the people of Nijni-Novgorod, the incarcerated Patriarch Hermogen was threatened with death unless he immediately exercised his influence to stop the rising in Nijni. He was also commanded to urge the people to take the oath of allegiance of the Polish Prince Vladislav. The courageous and faithful Patriarch refused to comply with these orders. On the contrary, instead of preventing the people from arming, he gave them his blessing and "he was sure the grace of God would be with them; but on traitors the wrath of God would fall and they would fail and they would be cursed in this world and the next." Thereupon the Patriarch was transferred to a still smaller cell where, according to contemporary reports, he died of starvation in February 1612. The noble patriot and unyielding hero did not live to see his prayers answered, "but his works followed after."

At last Prince Pojarski and the National Army were able to start for Moscow. They were urged on by the Archimandrite Dionissi, who feared lest the Poles might send reinforcements; for at this time only small bands were ravaging the country and the garrison in the Kremlin was beginning to suffer

want. The two leaders, the Prince and the Butcher, sent messengers before them, calling upon the cities to join them and to go against the Poles and Lithuanians in the strength of God. The response was immediate, and even the few towns which had supported the Pretender, or Vladislav, soon gave in to the general pressure. A united nation was arising to expel the enemy. The city of Yaroslav outdid the others by offering her entire possessions to the National Treasury, and from all over the country money was brought to Minin, the man in whom everybody trusted and believed.

It was Pojarski, however, who signed all the documents, for Minin was ignorant of writing. The Prince was the Commander-in-Chief, and also wielded for the time supreme civic power. He called a Zemski Sobor to decide upon the election of a new Tsar, for the people had taken an oath not to recognize any foreign prince, neither Vladislav of Poland, nor a prince of Sweden whom the Novgorod delegates were proposing as candidate. At this moment some foreigners offered their services to the Russians, among them Captain Margeret. In reply to this the Zemski Sobor wrote : " We thank you, Sir Capitaines, for your zeal for our fatherland ; we shall accept your services with alacrity should the enemy overpower us ; at present however there is no need for foreign soldiers or leaders ; all the estate of the Russian Empire have elected Prince Dmitri Pojarski Starodubski as their leader for civic and military matters, because of his wisdom, honesty and courage. All Russians are sacrificing life and property for the

Orthodox faith. We are serving the fatherland without pay, we are fighting with untiring energy against the foe, we are defeating the Poles and are cleansing the Muscovite Empire of them."

This Council only caused quarrels and delay, yet time was pressing, and from the Troitsa Monastery came urgent letters to hurry up before reinforcements could come to the besieged Poles. Pojarski lacked the gift of strenuous leadership and, in order to settle disputes, the Archimandrite Dionissi sent the retired Metropolitan of Rostov, a man generally honoured and respected, whose mediation was accepted by the quarrelling delegates.

After a delay of several months in Yaroslav, the National Army left that city for Moscow, and on August 20th, 1612, the troops joined those under the command of Prince Troubetzkoi. The leader of the besieging army (the remains of Lyapounov's militia) hailed Pojarski and Minin with joy ; but Zarouski, the Cossack leader, did so hypocritically, and though ostensibly friendly, he sent an assassin to kill Pojarski. The dastardly plot, however, was frustrated, and thereupon Zarouski fled with the worst of the rabble.

It was unfortunate that Pojarski was not equal to the post of Commander-in-Chief. He made various strategical blunders, and into the bargain distrusted the Cossacks, and so did his men, for they remembered the foul murder of Lyapounov.

The new army stood under the walls of Moscow, the three leaders, Troubetzkoi, Pojarski, and Minin, being in full agreement. The besieging forces, however, were kept in two camps, the chief body of

Cossacks by themselves and the National Army by itself.

Soon after the new army under Pojarski had joined the besiegers, a large relief party consisting of Lithuanian troops approached, bringing with it much provision for the besieged. Their leader tried to force his way through and, simultaneously, the garrison attempted a sortie, which failed, as did a second attempt two days later. Minin had asked and had received permission of Pojarski to lead a company personally against the Polish and Lithuanian soldiers, whom he successfully defeated. He forced the Polish commander to retreat; the latter, however, managed to send word to the besieged that he would return within a few days with a large army and relieve them.

Meanwhile, quarrel and strife broke out among the Russian leaders and the armies; the Cossacks, demanding higher pay, went on strike and refused to assist the National Army. It was impossible for Minin to accede to their demand, for his war-chest was depleted and the nation impoverished. Then it was that the patriotic Archimandrite of the Troitsa Monastery stepped into the breach. He sent his colleague, the priest Palitsin, the treasurer of the monastery, to offer to the strikers the costly vestments of his church as a pledge of future payment. Palitsin also addressed the Cossacks with fiery oratory and diplomatic cajolery until they felt not only humbled and ashamed, but touched by the generosity of the Archimandrite. They refused to accept the proffered vestments, and promised not to leave Moscow until the enemy had been expelled from within its sacred walls.

Troubetzkoi successfully attacked Kitaigorod, the Poles were therefore forced to seek refuge within the Kremlin. These besieged Poles and their prisoners, the Russian boyars, had been reduced by famine to the last limit of endurance. So terrible was their state that human corpses were devoured by the famished garrison; the weaker were killed by the stronger and immediately eaten, or their flesh pickled.

Compelled by the clamouring of the garrison, the Council of War now decided upon surrender, while the pro-Polish Russians begged for delay, for they dreaded falling into the hands of their compatriots, who would not have any pity on those they considered traitors to the national cause. Their urgent pleading to postpone the surrender was disregarded, and a humble offer of capitulation was sent to Pojarski and Minin. Knowing the fierceness of the Cossacks they feared their "tender" mercy. A petition to spare the lives of the Polish leaders was drawn up. This was generously promised them by Pojarski and Minin, whose word alone they trusted, and on October 24th, 1612, the gates of the Kremlin opened and a pitiful procession of emaciated Russian boyars, nobles and merchants marched out. Pojarski rode out to meet them, but the Cossacks yelled: "These traitors must be killed and their property divided among us." It was an anxious moment for all, but the National Army refused to listen to this suggestion, and for a moment it seemed as if a sanguinary conflict would break out between the allies. Meanwhile, on the bridge, stood speechless and terror-stricken a little band of Russian ladies—the last to leave. Justice and righteousness, however, won the

day ; though the Cossacks continued to threaten they stopped at that and then withdrew.

Those Russians who had against their will been kept within Moscow were tenderly looked after by their countrymen. On October 25th, the gates of the Kremlin were opened a second time—now for the Russian troops to enter in. Before them marched a procession, headed by that noble patriot, the Archimandrite of the Troitsa Monastery, whose heart must have been filled with joy inexpressible. A thanksgiving service was held and a vow made to erect a church in memory of a great deliverance. The Poles threw away their weapons and were taken captive to the Russian camp. All their property was divided among the Cossacks as overdue pay, but these lawless men did not honour the oath sworn to the garrison and killed many prisoners. Those, however, who had surrendered to Pojarski and the National Army were safe. Their lives were spared, but they were sent to various cities and there put in prison. Popular feeling was greatly aroused against them, and in one case they were only saved from being lynched by the intercession of the mother of Prince Pojarski.

The Polish King, when he heard of the capitulation of the Kremlin, could not believe the news. He sent two members of the Russian Embassy, whom he had kept imprisoned in Poland, to urge the Russians to disband and to take the oath of allegiance to his son. The National leaders, however, refused even to discuss his proposals, for the time had gone by when a foreigner could aspire to the throne of Muscovy.

By Christmas the news of the deliverance of Moscow

had spread all over Russia ; rejoicing and thanksgiving filled the heart of the nation. Moscow was delivered, but what the country now required was a lawful ruler. Preparations were made by the National Council to elect a Russian-born Tsar. Tradition says that the crown was offered to Prince, Pojarski, but that this upright man declined it on the grounds that the Romanoffs, relations of the late Tsar Feodor by his mother's side, had the greatest claim. Unfortunately not all the boyars were as noble as Pojarski. Intrigue was rife and it looked as though the defenders of the Fatherland were now going to be the means of bringing more disaster and ruin upon their country. Finally, however, Mikhail Romanoff, the young son of the Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov, was elected Tsar. Thanksgiving services were held and all, beginning with the boyars and ending with the Cossacks, took the oath of allegiance and promised to serve him and to combat his foes to the death.

Reports of these proceedings were circulated all over the country, but in the meanwhile, according to a legend, danger was threatening the candidate to the throne. The Poles, having heard of the unanimous election of Mikhail, decided to kill him, but "God put a wall of protection around the boy—the love of the people." Tradition says that some peasants were arrested by the Poles who were on the look-out for a guide to conduct them to the country residence of the Tsar-elect. One of these peasants, Susanin by name, volunteered to do so, and his offer was accepted. He had, however, secretly sent off his brother-in-law to warn the intended victim, and it was not until they

found themselves in deep snow in an almost impenetrable forest, that the exhausted soldiers discovered that they had been trapped. The noble peasant paid for his loyalty with his life, and the memory of this legendary patriot, who gave his "life for the Tsar," survives in song and story.

In Kostroma, where the newly elected Tsar had gone to join his mother, a deputation waited upon him, and with great solemnity handed him the official announcement of his election. The proffered rulership had, however, no attraction either for mother or son, who had no confidence in the wayward loyalty of the boyars.

The envoys did their utmost to convince the mother (whom they addressed, her son being a minor) that there was no comparison between the position of her son and that of the last three Tsars, "for it is not of his own will or seeking, but by the will of the people and by the will of God that he has been elected, and if he refuses to accept the responsibility he will be answerable before God for the suffering that will surely follow." Finally the mother gave her blessing to her son and, from the hands of the Archbishop, Mikhail Romanoff accepted—sceptre and crown—the symbols of sovereignty.

The condition of things in the Empire when the young Tsar took over the reins of government were much too complicated for one of his limited capacity and experience to handle successfully. His statesman-like father, who afterwards became co-ruler, was still a captive; Mikhail himself was not a born leader, and his kindly easy-going nature and melancholic tempera-



PRESENTATION OF THE CROWN TO MICHAEL ROMANOFF.

ment made him a prey to the self-seeking courtiers who surrounded him. A Dutch contemporary thus pathetically describes him: "The Tsar was like the sun hidden behind a cloud, therefore the land of Muscovy enjoyed neither heat nor light." Indeed, the sun had to pierce very heavy clouds before it shone again upon the Russian lands; for although the "troubulous times," as historians call this period of lawlessness, of feuds and wars, of famine and death, of factions within and enemies without came to an end, and the unhappy people breathed more freely, it was only very gradually that the country regained the prosperity which peace, and peace alone, can bring about.



CATHEDRAL OF THE TRINITY OF THE TROITSA-SERGEI MONASTERY.

Built in 1423.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROTOPOPE AVVAKUM AND THE BOYARYINIA

MOROZOV



FIGURE OF PRIEST, 17TH CENTURY

THE violence of the wind had abated, the foaming waves of political life had well-nigh spent their force, but a heavy swell still disturbed the troubled waters. Some fifty years had passed since the adventurous Dmtri had been carried along on the crest of a gigantic wave, only to be dashed to pieces on the rocks; since when Cossacks, robber-bands and rabble of all sorts had been cast up on the storm-beaten shore of national life. Amongst all this flotsam and jetsam were also a few priceless pearls—those good men and true who became the deliverers of their Fatherland.

The clouds which still hung over the land at the commencement of the new régime lifted for a while when the Patriarch Philaret, the good and wise father of the mediocre Mikhail, took the co-rulership of the Empire into his capable hands.

The reign of the first Romanoff ruler having

proved beneficent, it naturally followed that on the death of the Tsar Mikhail his son Alexei, then only sixteen years of age, succeeded him. Once again an immature youth became nominal head of the State, while the real power was wielded by a strong man, the young Tsar's tutor Morozov, who married the sister of his pupil's wife. In his capacity of brother-in-law of the Tsar, his influence greatly increased. Alexei Mikhailovitch, whose reign coincides with the period of the Commonwealth and of the Restoration in England, came to be known as "that most gentle Tsar," although it was in his time that the people of Russia found themselves once more in the throes of disruption. This time the trouble did not come as a cyclone or even as a storm, nor was it an upheaval which touched merely the material life of the nation, but rather an earthquake cleaving society asunder to its very foundation, revealing depths of spiritual life and opening up the living springs of religious feeling.

Among the numberless martyrs which this cleavage of opinion was to produce, two especially stand out as shining lights—a man and a woman, the lowly-born priest Avvakum and the lady of noble birth, the Boyaryinia Morozov—both deeply religious from early youth and both equally uncompromising in their attitude towards everything they considered false.

With the coming into power, in 1613, of the Romanoffs—the contemporaries of the Stuarts—a new era had opened up for Muscovy. In the immediate entourage of the Tsar were men who did their utmost to bring their Fatherland into line with the rest of Europe; they desired to break down the wall of

partition between Russia and Western Europe, but this was opposed by the conservative element which objected to Polish and German influence—indeed objected to the very presence of foreigners in their midst. Yet, in spite of this, the influence of Western civilization began to make itself felt, especially in that circle of society to which belonged such men as the cultured and refined Artamon Matveiev, who was married to a Scottish lady *née* Hamilton, Ordin Nashtchokin, a man of broad views, the first truly European statesman Muscovy had, and the Boyar Rtishtchev. This coterie of enlightened aristocrats began to alter the intellectual atmosphere of Moscow, and it was greatly due to them that European culture found a permanent entrance into Russia. They realized that more was wanted from Western Europe than merely its comforts and luxuries, and it was owing to their initiative that education was made accessible to the young generation of Russian nobles.

In Kiev, which was then under Polish jurisdiction, education according to Western standards was already flourishing, and it was there that the energetic and enterprising Boyar Rtishtchev found men who were able and willing to establish centres of intellectual light in his own dark Muscovy.

Two men became the leaders of this movement—the cultured monks : Slavinitski, who founded in Moscow the Græco-Latin Slavonic College, where “the wisdom of the Greeks” as well as Latin, Rhetoric and the principles of theology were taught ; and Simon Polotski, a writer of religious as well as secular drama, in every respect a versatile and cultured man. The

subjects taught in the college were new to the Russians, whose knowledge in the seventeenth century with regard to most subjects seems to have been extremely limited. Captain Margaret draws attention to this in one of his writings in which he says : "So great is the ignorance of the Muscovites that not a third of them can be found who even know the *Pater Noster* and the *Credo*. It is safe to say of the masses that their ignorance is the mother of their piety ; they despise learning and especially Latin. They have no schools, no universities, and the only teaching is done by priests who instruct youths in reading and writing, and only a very few do that."

The two priests from Kiev, who had come in answer to the warm invitation of Rtishtchev, were not slow in pointing out that the ceremonial of the Muscovite Church was full of errors and inaccuracies, which they put down to the ignorance of the clergy, of whom Fletcher had written that they were "voyde of all manner of learning, so are they warie to keepe out all means that might bring any in as fearing to have their ignorance discovered. . . ."

The Russian priests from the Ukraina or "Little Russia" differed in many ways from their Muscovite brethren ; for instance, they made the sign of the Cross with three fingers instead of with two, as was customary in Great Russia at that period ; the way in which they read the prayers was different, also they preached sermons, a thing hitherto unheard of, and, in support of these practices, they cited the authority both of the Byzantine Church, and of Little Russia.

The observant English Ambassador remarks on this

absence of preaching: "As for preaching," he writes, "the words of God, or any teaching or exhorting such as are under them, they neyther use it nor have any skill of it; the whole clergie beyng utterlie unlearned both for other knowledge and in the word of God."

The newcomers considered the Muscovite Church as having fallen away from the true faith, while the Muscovites, on their side, considered the Kievites little better than Poles or Roman Catholics. In fact, in the eyes of all the people of Great Russia, the guardianship of the true Faith had long since passed from Byzantium to Moscow; no longer was it Santa Sophia of Constantinople but the Uspenski Sobor of Moscow that was their centre of orthodoxy. Apart from this, the view was generally held that "each people has its own fatherland and its own laws, which are better not transferred to other countries."

A foreigner then residing in Moscow writes apropos of this exclusiveness: "The Russians would sooner die than let their children go into foreign lands unless coerced by the Tsar. They believe that Russia is the only Christian Empire, that all other lands are inhabited by pagans—unbaptized people who do not believe in the true God, and that the souls of their children would be for ever lost if they were to die in a strange country amongst unbelievers; that those who die in their own homeland go direct to Paradise, and that such seclusion was imperative in order to keep people out of danger of contamination."

Bitter antagonism sprang up between the Kievite monks and the cathedral clergy of Moscow, or Protopopes, who had set themselves the task of revising the

ceremonial. Both parties had the same object at heart—the reformation of the Church, but although having the same end in view they worked from different starting-points. The Muscovite Protopopes went back to Russian antiquity, the Kievite monks to universal antiquity, and a clash became inevitable.

Slavinitski and Polotski believed in the efficacy of science and education and in the necessity of acquaintance with Western thought. They urged the study of history in order to find out what practices were universal and would thus help to solve knotty problems. The Protopopes, on the contrary, turned their backs in disgust upon all such innovations ; faith alone was sufficient, knowledge was dangerous. As to the study of church history, they were satisfied with that contained in their own ecclesiastical literature, and in the Lives of the Saints. What could they learn from the experience of other Churches ?

At the commencement the antagonism between these two schools of thought was purely academic, but when the new Patriarch Nikon actually altered the ceremonial, open war broke out. As Metropolitan of Novgorod, Nikon had been a zealous member of the Muscovite Reform Party ; but, unfortunately, he was of too ambitious and autocratic a nature to ask the assistance of his old friends, and decided to carry out the reforms unaided. He was, moreover, rapidly changing his views, for, as a result of his intercourse with Greek ecclesiastics on matters of ritual and the customs of the Eastern Churches, doubts had arisen in his mind as to the soundness of his former position. Such doubts inclined him to listen to Slavinitski, in

whom common sense, sound learning, and true spirituality were harmoniously blended. From being an opponent of this learned monk, Nikon soon became his friend, and having adopted his point of view, he decided to bring the experience of the Universal Church to bear upon that of Russia. With regard to the making of the sign of the Cross, he discovered that it was the using of two fingers which was contrary to universal practice and therefore an innovation even in Russia. He also carefully compared the MSS. in the Patriarchal Library with ancient Greek and Slavonic MSS., and found only too many discrepancies between them. He made Slavinitzki head of the Imperial printing establishment, discharged all the professional correctors of books and instituted a Commission of Revision in their stead.

All this branded Nikon as a traitor in the eyes of his former friends. They called him a renegade and heretic, for not only had he made common cause with those whom he had shortly before accused of heresy, but was he not even now ready to introduce into the Church on his own account those very things which he had so recently condemned?

The hearts of the eager and sincere but ignorant Protopopes grew heavy with apprehension. That their fears were not groundless became apparent only too soon. During the Lent of 1653, the Patriarch issued an order that from henceforth certain customary prostrations were to be omitted on Quadragesima Sunday, and that the sign of the Cross was always to be made with three fingers. The Conservative party of "Old Believers"—or "Old Ritualists," as they came to be called on account of their passionate adherence to

Muscovite traditions—feeling that this was but the thin edge of the wedge, immediately drew up a protest, which they sent to the Tsar. The Tsar, however, who was absolutely under the influence of the Patriarch, took no notice of it.

Undaunted by this discouragement, and strengthened by the conviction that theirs was a righteous cause and that the foundations of their religion were being shaken, these Old Believers refused to comply with the new order, and as at first no measures were taken to enforce it, it seemed as though they would carry the day. Nikon, however, was merely biding his time; he could not forgive his former friends for thus flouting his authority, and very soon war, bitter and obdurate, broke out between the two parties, "No compromise" being the watchword of both. The points on which they differed were really trifling in themselves, and the bitterest strife was waged about such minutiae as the crossing with three fingers instead of with two fingers, or as the repetition of "O Lord, have mercy" instead of "Lord, have mercy," the repetition of three Hallelujahs instead of two, and the spelling of the name of Jesus—Iissus instead of Issus. As to signing oneself with the Cross, that was a part of their very natures, of every act of daily life; only when this is realized can we understand the intensity of feeling aroused by the alteration commanded.

The position of the Nikonians had been immensely strengthened by the pronouncements of the Patriarch of Antioch and the Metropolitan of Nicea, both of whom attended the Council called by Nikon. The Patriarch of Antioch had made the following statement regarding

the manner of making the sign of the Cross : " We have from the beginning accepted the faith as handed down to us by the Holy Apostles and by the Fathers, and as confirmed by the Œcumenical Councils, which includes the tradition that the sign of the Cross must be made with the thumb and two first fingers of the right hand, and if any orthodox Christian doeth not this according to the tradition of the Eastern Church, which has been since the beginning of the world, he is a heretic . . . and we count the same to be excommunicated from the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and to be anathema." To this the Metropolitan of Nicea added the words : " Upon him who doth not cross himself with three fingers rests the curse of the 380 holy Fathers who gathered at the Council of Nicea and other Councils."

Nikon and his party, who were supported by the Tsar, speedily became the persecutors, and the Old Believers, obstinate nonconformists to new regulations, became the persecuted. Nikon's opportunity to make his power felt came only too soon. One of his antagonists was falsely accused of irreverence to a sacred ikon, whereupon the Patriarch called a Council, in order to give an air of legality to the proceedings, and had him condemned and sentenced to severe punishment. This opened the breach all the wider : the laity stepped in, siding almost to a man with the Old Believers against those whom they felt to be undermining their religion. They were convinced that, although these reforms seemed only to concern outward forms, they were in reality a subtle attack on the inward spirit.

The first victim of the persecution which now broke out was the Tsar's confessor, Neronov, who was sent into exile, with the result that some of the more timid began to think of compromise, while others became bolder. It was at this juncture, however, that the Old Believers found a leader in the person of the Protopope Avvakum, a man of blameless life, renowned for his piety, spiritual power and strength of conviction; one whose heart was on fire for the truth, and who possessed to a remarkable degree the gift of oratory.

It seemed an almost hopeless task to bring about an understanding between the leaders of the two parties. On one occasion, after a heated argument, the learned Polotski is reported to have said about Avvakum: "He has a great natural intelligence, but no understanding whatever of Science," while Avvakum pointed out the impossibility of coming to any agreement with the Kievites, saying: "He looks to find wisdom in intellectual controversy—I seek it in tears and with prayers at the feet of Christ."

After Nikon had issued his order which changed the ritual, Avvakum boldly stepped forward and denounced the Patriarch from the pulpit. Soon after, he was banished to Siberia, where he spent years of terrible suffering at the hands of a certain Pashkov, the ruthless and brutal Governor of Dauria. Ten years later he was enabled to return to Moscow, having been recalled by order of the Tsar. The "gentle and most pious Tsar" not only respected the fearless Protopope, but was genuinely attached to him. On his return from exile, Avvakum lived in peace and quiet within the walls of the Kremlin, frequently receiving signs of

favour from the Tsar. It was at this time that Avvakum made the acquaintance of the woman who was to become his best known disciple and later fellow-martyr. This was the Boyaryinia Feodosia Morozov, the young sister-in-law of the Tsar's powerful minister, and hence a connection of the Tsaritsa.

Avvakum still hoped that there would be a return to the "Old Way," and he again petitioned the Tsar to return to the Old Belief, but without success, and then he began to preach against those he considered heretics. The ecclesiastical authorities, especially the Patriarch, began to complain of the zealous priest's activities. They contended that he was leading the masses astray. His repeated petitions to the Tsar and attacks on opponents naturally led to renewed persecution, and in the year 1669, half a year only after his return to Moscow, he was once more sent into banishment—this time to the prison of Pustozersk, situated not far from the shores of the Kara Sea.

When only seventeen years of age, Feodosia, the eldest daughter of the Boyar Sokovnin, had been married to Gleb Morozov. The old Boyar Morozov loved the charming wife of his younger brother, and the pious Feodosia found a real friend in the Tsar's former tutor, whom the new intellectual movement had left untouched. He was deeply attached to his sister-in-law, who loved to converse with him about spiritual matters, and she found in him a ready and sympathetic listener on the topics so dear to the earnest-minded young wife. When very little over twenty years of age Feodosia lost her husband, after only a few years of happy marriage, and, in accordance with

custom, the widow carried on the management of the estate on behalf of her little son. The Boyaryinia, on account of her rank, held an important position at Court, and was also an intimate friend of the Tsaritsa. In her own home she had a retinue of three hundred servants : she used to drive about in a carriage made of silver, inlaid with mosaic, and drawn by six or even twelve horses : behind her carriage walked never less than one hundred—sometimes two or three hundred—serfs, both male and female, “to guard her honour and her life.”

All this pomp and show, incumbent upon one in her position, had no effect on the inner life of Feodosia, who had early learned to place a right value on all such outward things, and after her husband's death she began to withdraw herself from the noisy tumult of Court life and to seek comfort and solace in religious exercises.

In those days religion was observed rather in the letter than in the spirit, Christianity consisting chiefly of a rigid observance of ceremonial, yet works of charity and acts of mercy were also looked upon as essentials by those who truly loved God, and to these belonged the widow of Gleb Morozov. It was in 1664, after his return from exile, that she came under the influence of Avvakum's powerful personality. Her ardent soul responded instinctively to his preaching ; she readily accepted his teaching and adopted his attitude of uncompromising refusal to conform to the new order of things introduced by Nikon.

In order to do justice to the heroism of all who suffered during that period for their faith, it is neces-

sary to enter into the spirit of those days with its intense conservatism and horror of all innovations ; otherwise they would seem to have wasted their lives for the mere sake of externals of worship.

When it became known that the Boyaryinia Morozov had definitely thrown in her lot with the Old Believers, two influential ecclesiastics were sent to the widow to try and convince her of the error of her ways, but nothing could shake her loyalty to the teaching of her "Spiritual Father." In punishment for this obstinacy she was deprived of her patrimonial estate, and it was only due to the Tsaritsa's intercession on her behalf that she was let off so easily. From this time forward she appeared less and less frequently at Court, contenting herself with the society of a few like-minded friends. The loss of her estates did not seem to trouble her greatly, for Avvakum's ideals of asceticism found in her a ready response. The Boyaryinia was one of the few to live out the ideals of Sylvester as taught in his *Domostroi*: "The lady of the house must set a good example, must organize the work of the household and must herself understand every kind of needlework and cookery and see that nothing is wanting in her store-cupboard."

Of his spiritual daughter, Avvakum gives the following description : "She kept law and order in her household, inquired personally into the needs of her serfs, ruling some with the stick and others with love and pity. She often used to sit down and weave the linen which she afterwards made into shirts for the poor. In the evening, disguised in shabby garments, she would walk about the streets of Moscow, accom-

panied by her faithful attendant, distributing these shirts amongst the poor. She also paid secret visits to prisons and almshouses, bringing gifts of money and clothing. Many a man she saved from imprisonment by paying up his mortgage when it had fallen due." Indeed, the following words of Sylvester might well have been written for her: "It is good to meet such women, not merely for the sake of eating and drinking with them, but to hear their elevating conversation, which is profitable to the soul." In her household, many a "Yurodivyi" or "Natural"—half-witted person—received hospitality, for such in those days were considered "blessed." Homeless wanderers, they were treated by everyone with respect and even reverence. On account of their cryptic sayings they exercised great influence over the common people, who believed them to be endowed with prophetic powers; while they called forth pity by their melancholia, they also caused great amusement by their queer humours.

It was these "Naturals" who became the best propagandists of the "schism," travelling as they did through the length and breadth of Russia. They carried the news of the attack on the "Old Faith" and of those innovations which were looked upon by Avvakum and his followers as signs of the approach of Antichrist. Two of the most famous of these "blessed ones," Feodor and Cyprian, with whose zeal and asceticism even exacting Avvakum was deeply impressed, lived for some time in the house of the Boyaryinia. He wrote of them: "During the day they talked foolishly, but they

spent their nights in prayer and tears : one of them would stand perhaps five hours and weep, or, after many hours spent in prayer, would make one thousand prostrations. The other mortified his flesh by braving the frost and snow of five winters, going bare-foot and wearing nothing but a linen shirt. Avvakum, on his return journey from Siberia, had met Feodor and shown him one of the revised prayer books. The fool, snatching the book out of his hand and flinging it into the heated oven, cursed the innovations ; for, as the exile Protopope puts it, "he had a red-hot faith in Christ."

From that time Feodor became an ardent follower of Avvakum, whom he accompanied to Moscow ; and it was probably through the latter that he was introduced to the Boyaryinia.

The other Yorodivyi, Cyprian, was well known to the Tsar and was welcomed in many boyar families ; he openly wept for, and bemoaned the downfall of the Old Faith and frequently ran beside the carriage of the Tsar, pleading with him to abolish the innovations. So publicly and fearlessly did Cyprian attack the Patriarch, that he was first incarcerated in a monastery and then banished to the far northern prison of Pustozersk on the estuary of the Petchora, but the outspoken words of this ardent opponent of reform were only silenced when, by order of the Tsar, he was put to death.

The Boyaryinia always gladly welcomed strangers, and many monks and nuns, fugitives from persecution for their refusal to conform to the new ritual, were tenderly cared for by her. In truly apostolic fashion

she "washed the feet of the saints," and did it all so graciously that when feeding the hungry she would herself partake of the meals set before her poor guests.

As time went on, the house of this great lady became more like a monastic establishment than a private house, thus once more fulfilling the ideal of Sylvester who would have liked every home to be run on those lines. The religious rules which she introduced with regard to nocturnal prayer were encouraged by Avvakum who, from his exile, wrote to her: "Lady! Light of mine eyes! I love the rules for vigils of the night; shouldst thou be lazy, however, and fail to carry them out, see that thou chasteneth thy flesh next day by abstaining from food, for the soul is not a toy to be played with or to be deadened with fleshly indulgence." All his injunctions were carefully carried out by her.

After Avvakum had been banished from Moscow, Feodosia used to go and hear the fiery sermons of another famous Old Believer, to whom the people flocked in crowds. When he was banished, many of his congregation followed him to the Cyrillo-Byelozersk Monastery, where he was kept a prisoner for twelve years. It was this monk who put the Boyaryinia into touch with the lady Melania, a nun of noble birth who became her friend. She was as much the heart of the circle of the Old Believers as Avvakum was the brain. From his place of captivity Avvakum wrote many letters to the Old Believers in Moscow and especially to Melania, who became the medium of communication between the outer

world and himself. It was she who tenderly cared for his bodily needs, sending him those necessities of life which enabled him to keep alive. Less daring and provocative than he, she was better able to serve the Old Ritualists, now considered schismatics by the ecclesiastical authorities.

It was she who carried on the work begun by Avvakum in the strong and true heart of Feodosia, and it was due to the nun's influence that the lighter, brighter side of life was gradually pushed into the background and that a strain of fanaticism became apparent in the future martyr.

One of the many friends of the Boyaryinia was the Boyar Rtishtchev in whose house the representatives of the contending parties met for discussions which developed into endless and fruitless controversies. Gentle and conciliatory by nature, the Boyar Rtishtchev was deeply grieved at the widening of the breach between the Kievite monks and the Old Believers. He, therefore, did his utmost to restrain the Boyaryinia from going to extremes, pleading with her to make the sign of the Cross with three fingers. He tried to make her realize how much lighter and easier her life could be if only she would dissociate herself from the party to which she now adhered so strongly. The old Boyar knew better than she did to what danger she was exposing herself by publicly championing the banished Avvakum: "Dost thou realize that the man for whose teaching thou art ready to die has been cursed by our Hierarchy?" To this impassioned outburst, the lady sweetly made reply: "Thou art mistaken, dear Uncle, in that thou callest

the bitter sweet and the sweet bitter: Father Avvakum is a true disciple of Christ and therefore those who desire to please God must needs listen to his teaching."

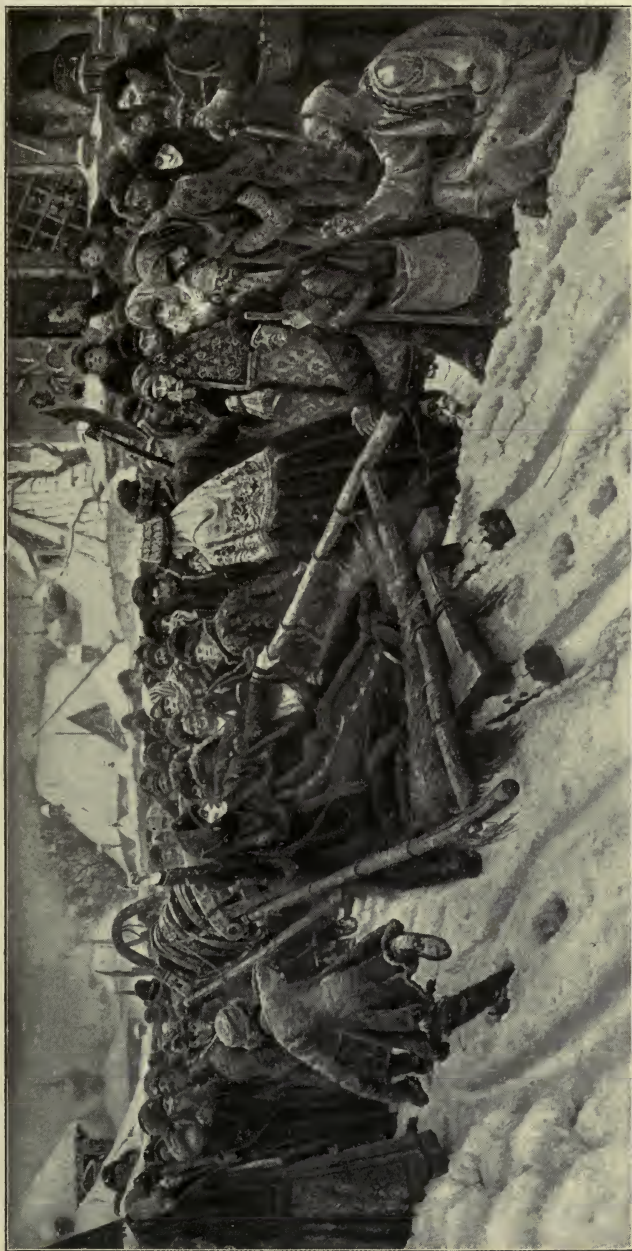
In course of time this unyielding attitude on her part created a barrier between Feodosia and her relations. The Boyar Rtishtchev's daughter Anna, however, still tried to win the Boyaryinia over, and implored her not to set herself up in opposition to the Tsar, reminding her of what it would mean to her son if all her possessions were confiscated—a highly probable eventuality if she persisted in angering the Tsar. But the friend's pleading was in vain: "Much as I love my son, and dear as is all that concerns his welfare, I love Christ still better and dare not, even for the sake of my only son, do what I know to be wrong." So saying, Feodosia crossed herself with two fingers.

She was ready to "endure the loss of all things" for Christ's sake, and Avvakum's letters confirmed her in this attitude. "Let us patiently endure whatsoever the Nikonians may do to us," he wrote; "let us rejoice, for in Christ is our joy. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; here we have prison and stake, axe and gallows—there the song of the angels, glory, praise, honour and eternal joy . . . bitter is our winter on earth, but sweet will it be in Paradise; painful is endurance, but blessed is healing. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid—as faithful soldiers of Christ, bravely face the fire and suffer cheerfully for His sake and in defence of the ancient Sacred Books." His admonitions fell upon prepared soil. Many letters of similar import were sent by the faithful Shepherd in exile to his

persecuted flock in Moscow, whom he addressed as :
“My precious, my blessed ones!” for this stern warrior for the faith had a very tender heart.

The Boyaryinia deeply influenced her only sister Eudoxia, Princess Ouroussov, and the faith so dear to both strengthened the bond of love between them. In spite of their prejudice, both ladies continued to attend church for the sake of appearance. This went on for many years, for after the first futile attempt to coerce her, the Boyaryinia, although in disfavour, was left in peace, the Tsar being opposed to violent measures and the Tsaritsa being deeply attached to the saintly widow.

During the minority of her son Feodosia had felt it incumbent upon her, as steward and guardian of his property, to restrain her personal inclinations ; but when he came of age she considered herself free to take the step she had contemplated for so many years, namely, to refrain altogether from attending the “unorthodox” Court, where, owing to her rank and position, she had hitherto been obliged to play a prominent part. Her desire was to give herself up wholly to the religious life—her intention being to take secretly the monastic vows and then still to remain, with the nuns to whom she had given shelter, in her own home. Her more prudent friend and adviser, Melania, strongly disapproved of this step : “It cannot be kept secret,” she urged, “and when the Tsar hears of it, there will undoubtedly be inquiries and it will certainly bring trouble upon those who have shriven thee, and to leave home and enter a nunnery would only make matters worse !” She, therefore,



THE BOYARYNIA MOROZOV.
From the painting by V. J. Sourikov, in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

implored the Boyaryinia to wait at least until her son was married, as it would be impossible for her, as a nun, to take part in the marriage ceremony.

The mother's firm decision, however, remained unshaken, for her soul revolted at the hypocrisy involved in attending service in churches where the new ritual was in use. So much in earnest was she, that she finally succeeded in having her own way, and, under the name of Feodora, she was shriven by Father Dosithe, one of the Old Believers, who entrusted her formally to the spiritual care of Melania. This happened in December 1671. From that time forward, the Boyaryinia handed over the care of the household to a faithful servant and regulated her own life according to the monastic rules of prayer, fasting and silence.

The apprehensions of her worldly-wise friend were soon justified : her failure to attend the Tsar's marriage with his second wife, Natalia Narishkin, started the trouble. Her rank and position as a connection of the Tsar demanded of the Boyaryinia an active participation in the wedding ceremony. Her refusal to attend deeply offended Alexei Mikhailovitch, who did not believe in the genuineness of the excuse she put forward, namely, that she was suffering so much with her feet that she could neither stand nor walk. He was not far wrong either, for the real reason which prevented her from attending the wedding was that it would have been her part of the ceremony to recite the Monarch's titles in which the word "orthodox"—which she denied to be right—was included ; but worst of all, she would have been obliged to receive the bless-

ing of the archbishops whom she looked upon as heretics. Far rather would she suffer anything than have fellowship with the "Nikonians."

"I see she has grown proud," remarked the Tsar, to whom the refusal to participate in his day of rejoicing was an unforgivable insult. He restrained his anger, however, for the time being, and left her unmolested ; but in the autumn of the same year he sent, first, the Boyar Troyekourov, and a month later, her sister's husband, Prince Ouroussov, to intimate to her his displeasure, and to inform her that unless she would submit and accept all the newly edited books, severe punishment would be meted out to her.

These threats left the lady unmoved ; she replied that the Tsar's anger was quite inexplicable to her, as she was innocent of any desire to wound him, and was only astonished that her particular form of piety should have thus aroused his ire. "If, however, what the Tsar desires is to turn me away from the true faith, let him not be under any misapprehension, but tell him that hitherto the Lord—the Son of God—has protected me with His right arm, and that I have no more intention now than I ever had, to forsake the faith of my fathers and to accept in its place the laws of Nikon. I intend to die in the faith in which I have been born and baptized. It is waste of time for the Tsar to trouble about me, his humble slave, for nothing will ever induce me to deny our orthodox faith."

The bold reply of this courageous woman increased the resentment of Alexei Mikhailovitch, who, upon hearing her message, pronounced these ominous words : "It will not be easy for her to resist me ; one of us must

conquer !” Being ever slow to act, the Tsar stayed his hand yet a little longer, but the contest between Tsar and woman was merely postponed.

After the Tsar’s ultimatum, the nuns who lived within the Boyaryinia’s house, realizing that the cloud which overshadowed her hospitable roof was rapidly lowering, craved permission to leave. The Boyaryinia, however, knew the Tsar’s hesitating nature, and was kept informed of all that was going on at the palace by her brother-in-law, who came every evening to visit his wife, the Princess having now taken up her abode altogether at her sister’s house. The noble widow was, therefore, justified in comforting her frightened companions with the words : “ Fear not, my doves, they are not going to interfere with me just yet ! ”

Two weeks later, however, she gave them the desired permission, saying, “ My time has come ! Go where-soever the Lord will lead you ; give me your blessing, and pray for me that the Lord may give me strength to suffer for His sake.” Truly, she was to need the prayers of her friends, for there was awaiting her such a time of trial as probably she herself had not fully anticipated. Prince Ouroussov secretly favoured the Old Believers, and therefore, in no way interfered with his wife’s adherence to that party. It was he who now told her to go and warn her sister that the Tsar was thoroughly inflamed against her, and that she must be prepared for great suffering.

That night the sisters sat up and waited together for what was to come, when suddenly, at two o’clock in the morning, they heard the great gates of the house of the Morozovs swing open. For a moment the brave

heart faltered, the Boyaryinia cowered down into her chair, covering her face with her hands ; but it was only a passing weakness, and at the words of her beloved sister, "Be not afraid, Christ is with us !" she recovered herself. Both ladies prostrated themselves in prayer, and adjured each other to "stand fast for the truth !" Then they separated, the Princess seeking refuge in a secret closet, where for months past the nun Melania had been kept in hiding.

Accompanied by one of the secretaries of the Boyar Duma, the Archimandrite Joakim stalked boldly into the Boyaryinia's bedchamber and sternly commanded her to render submission to the Tsar and to answer every question put to her. He then asked her where Melania was, to which she replied, "Many have enjoyed the hospitality of my house, amongst others, she whom you seek, but they have all left me." The secretary then began to make a search, and soon found the door of the closet. Upon opening the door, he beheld the Princess, who, finding herself discovered, called out, "I am Peter Ouroussov's wife !" Then came the crucial moment of her life. Commanded to confess how she crossed herself, she bravely made the sign of the Cross with two fingers, saying, "This is my belief !" adding, as if to give herself courage, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner !"

Her confession was immediately repeated to the Archimandrite by the secretary, and leaving the two ladies in charge of that official, the high ecclesiastic returned to the Tsar, who was excitedly awaiting the result of the nocturnal visit to his defiant connection.

He was told that not only the Boyaryinia, but her sister also, were firmly withstanding the Imperial command. The Tsar was taken aback at the news : "The Princess has always been gentle and agreeable—I have never heard that she abominated our service like that other mad, bad woman." Deeply offended, he gave orders that both women should be arrested immediately.

The feelings of Prince Ouroussov, who had been present at this conversation, can be imagined. Helpless and tongue-tied, the unhappy husband had to stand by while all this was going on, for he knew that matters had gone too far for any words of his to influence the Tsar's decision ; he was a noble husband of a noble wife, and the consciousness of his sympathy was one of the greatest comforts his wife experienced during her prolonged trial.

Returning to the house of the accused, the Archimandrite now enquired of the servants as to their manner of crossing themselves—but, like mistress, like maid—fearlessly they declared their convictions. To the Boyaryinia, Joakim then disclosed the order he had received from the Tsar : "Drive her out of house and home ! For," said he, "thou hast not known how to live in subjection to the Tsar, but thyself hast become more and more stiff-necked. Thou hast been long enough exalted, now be abased ! Arise, away with thee !"

She, however, behaved as if she did not hear his words, whereupon the priest ordered her to be lifted into a chair and to be carried out behind him into the yard. Unobserved by the Boyaryinia, her son fol-

lowed the little procession to the hall door ; silently he bowed to the receding figure of his beloved mother, whom he was never to see again.

The sisters were chained by the ankles and kept under strict surveillance in the servants' hall ; two days later they were loosed from their fetters and commanded to follow those who had come to take them away. Again the Boyaryinia refused to comply, whereupon she was carried to the hostel of the Tchoudov Monastery, her sister walking behind her.

On coming into the hall the two women bowed low to the Holy Ikon, but gave the faintest possible sign of recognition to the men there assembled, for it was a point of honour with the Old Believers to express whenever possible their scorn for their opponents—the enemies of the Faith. There were the Metropolitan Paul, the Archimandrite Joakim, and various others. The Metropolitan had become notorious as the chief inquisitor of the “schismatics.” It was this sensuous, worldly-minded man, a bitter foe of the ascetic Old Ritualists, who now addressed the widow. In a soft insinuating voice he expressed his regret that she should ever have listened to the blandishments of those fugitive monks and nuns with whom it had pleased her to surround herself.

Her answer was that these faithful servants of God had been the means of leading her into the way of truth. In vain did the Metropolitan urge her to fall in with the wishes of the Tsar ; in vain did he plead with her to remember her son : “It is Christ I have promised to obey, and to the Light

given to me I will remain true to the end ! I live for Christ and not for my son ! ”

The interrogation lasted a long time and, finally, the irritated ecclesiastic asked her angrily : “ What do you think of us all—surely not that we are all heretics ? ”

“ You are all like Nikon—that enemy of God, who introduced heresy into the Church ! ”

Her sister responded in like manner, and the two obdurate ladies were once more put into chains and taken back to the place where they had spent the night. On the morrow a heavy chain was placed around the Boyaryinia’s neck and fixed to a chair. The prisoner kissed the chain, saying : “ Praise the Lord for having granted me the honour of bearing fetters as St. Paul did ! ” The two sisters were then carried out. The Boyaryinia was placed in a common sledge and driven through the town ; the crowd through which she passed was divided in feeling—many deeply sympathized with this sufferer for the Faith they also held, and called down blessings upon her head, while others scoffed and jeered at the unwonted sight of a great lady being driven along like a criminal.

“ Why is she such a fool as to resist the Tsar ? Let her suffer for her obstinacy ! ”

All along the route, whenever the Boyaryinia recognized fellow-believers, she encouraged them by raising her arm with the two fingers outstretched ; she did this with renewed vigour when passing the place where she suspected the Tsar to be looking upon the indignity to which she was being exposed

by his orders, wishing to show him that she gloried in her bonds.

The indignities of these last hours were but an earnest of the suffering to come; the two devoted sisters were separated and kept under strict supervision. The Princess Ouroussov, who was incarcerated in a convent, showed as much strength of conviction as her sister who was kept a prisoner in the hostel of the Peshtcherski Monastery. The Princess could never be induced to attend church services voluntarily, and in order to avoid them she even resorted to the ruse of pretending to be utterly unable to move. This did not lead to the desired result, for her inert body would be lifted on to a stretcher and carried into the church. More than once the sight of some Old Believers amongst the crowd made her groan as if in agony: "Stop a moment, I feel so ill!" and then when the nuns obeyed the command of the great lady, the Princess would start up and begin to upbraid them for dragging her by force to church. She invariably made good use of the opportunity of enlivening her audience in the street with a lusty attack against the Nikonians, and it became quite a popular form of entertainment for rich and poor alike to go and watch the Princess being dragged into church.

A week after the Boyaryinia Morozov's arrival at her place of detention, one of the Old Believers managed to gain access to her, and through this friend she sent messages of comfort and encouragement to her humbler fellow-believers, many of whom had also been arrested and put into chains.

The Boyaryinia was frequently visited by the Metropolitan of Ryazan who had formerly been an Old Believer himself and one of Avvakum's companions and friends. It was hoped that since he had accepted the new ritual, he would be better able to understand her difficulties and to convince her of the error of her ways, but all his attempts to do so were in vain. What troubled the Boyaryinia most was the fact that, owing to being chained to a chair, she was unable to make the numerous prostrations incumbent upon a nun. Of this enforced "idleness" she bitterly complained to her beloved "Mother," Melania, with whom she managed to keep in regular communication all the while that the Tsar was trying in vain to trace her whereabouts. Lively intercourse was also kept up between the prisoner and other friends in spite of all orders to the contrary, for the very guards who were put to watch over her acted as intermediaries.

The Tsar felt that if he could not keep her friends away from her he could at least cut her off from all her relations, and therefore sent her two brothers away on military expeditions. Thus the last link with her home was broken, for about the same time she received news of the death of her beloved son, who, it was told her, had died of grief—"a punishment from God for her apostasy." The Old Believers, however, strongly suspected foul play, and were convinced that the foreign doctors had precipitated his end, for these had been sent to him by the Tsar as soon as the latter had heard of the young Boyar's illness. Avvakum, writing lovingly

from exile to the broken-hearted mother, also expresses his belief in the theory that there had been foul play.

After the death of the young Boyar Morozov, all the property of his widowed mother was confiscated by order of the Tsar. Her horses and lands were distributed amongst the boyars, and all her jewelry and valuables were sold and the money divided. Though placed under a ban, and robbed of all her possessions, the Boyaryinia was not allowed to suffer want, for she was always nourished and upheld by the Old Believers of Moscow, who thereby exposed themselves to still greater persecution.

Chained and imprisoned, "yet free to follow out her conviction," that is how she looked upon her condition. The very Streltsi who were guarding her did all they could to make life easier for her, even to the point of secretly letting a priest of the Old Believers come in to give her the Sacrament.

The Tsar himself permitted the Boyaryinia to have with her two of her old servants who had attended upon her in the days of her wealth, and who now, sharing her faith, were only too glad to serve her in her time of trouble. Once she even received a visit from her sister who had cajoled the nun set to guard her, to let her go home for a night to see her children, saying that she could no longer bear the separation from them—and the soft-hearted nun could not refuse to let her go and "give them each a kiss"—instead of which she went to see her sister. This expedition, however, proved more dangerous than she had anticipated, and it was only

due to the kindness of the Streltsi that she was not found out, an eventuality which would have been calamitous to all concerned.

Not only the Streltsi who guarded the Boyaryinia and the nuns who looked after the Princess acted as intermediaries between the two sisters, but also many a boyaryinia came to visit them both. Even the Tsar's own son used to drive out to the Monastery where the ladies were held in captivity. On one of these occasions, looking through the barred window of the Princess's cell, he said to her with profound emotion: "I am deeply grieved to see you suffering like this. I do wish I knew whether it is indeed the truth for which you are enduring such hardships."

A few months later, the Patriarch Nikon was superseded, and then it seemed as if an end were coming to the suffering of the two sisters. The Abbess of the Convent in which the Princess was confined took advantage of the first opportunity to tell the newly appointed Patriarch of her interesting captive and also about the Boyaryinia. The Mother Superior sympathized with them both and knew that the Patriarch had only recently seceded from the ranks of the Old Believers. Her confidence was not misplaced and soon afterwards the Patriarch discussed the question with the Tsar. He counselled him to restore to the Boyaryinia at least her house and a hundred peasants, and to let the Princess return to her husband. "What harm can these women do?" At this Alexei Mikhailovitch shook his head: "You do not know the wickedness of

that woman," he said : "I would long ago have done as you suggested if she had been different. You would not believe how the Boyaryinia has abused and still continues to abuse us. She has put me to great inconvenience and causes me endless trouble. If you doubt my words, have her brought before you and interrogate her and you will see then how immovable she is."

That very night the Boyaryinia was brought before the Patriarch, who soon came to the conclusion that the Tsar was not far wrong. She remained true to her motto—"No compromise"—and refused even to accept the Patriarch's offer to become himself her Confessor and to minister to her in person. Suddenly a possible way out of the difficulty occurred to him. He called for holy oil, intending to anoint her in the hope of bringing her to reason. The Boyaryinia, true to her determination never to stand before a heretic, had up to now been resting limply in the arms of the two guards who supported her on either side to prevent her, as it seemed, from falling to the ground. When, however, she realized what was about to happen, she flung off her guards, drew herself up to her full height and with eyes blazing with righteous indignation, bade him remember her rank—then overwhelmed with the horror of it, she wailed : "Do not ruin me with apostate oil !" Clanking her chains in agony, she exclaimed, "Wouldst thou undo in one moment all I have suffered for so long ? Go, leave me—I desire none of thy holy things !"

The baffled, and now infuriated, Patriarch is said to

have threatened to strike the bold woman to the ground. Anyway she was taken back again to the hostel of the Peshtcherski Monastery.

The Patriarch was equally unsuccessful with the Princess and her fellow captive and friend, the nun Maria—also a lady of noble birth. The night after his interview with them, the three women were taken to the torture chamber, where the supreme test was applied to them by three boyars. The first to suffer was Maria. Stript to the waist, with her hands tied behind her, she was brought up to the fire, where she was raised upon the rack. Then they laid hold of the Princess and tore off her coloured robe, crying: "Thou art under the Tsar's ban, how is it thou darest to wear coloured garments?" and then she too was raised on to the rack. The turn of the Boyaryinia came last, and to the gibes and taunts of her tormentors she replied with dignity and calm, declaring that she was glad to suffer as her Lord had suffered.

Her hands were tied behind her back and she was then suspended from a beam, being kept for some time in this position, after which new tortures were then applied. Maria was cruelly beaten with the knout, the sisters being threatened with like treatment unless they abjured their heresy. The sight of the bloody stripes on her friend's back aroused the indignation of the Boyaryinia, who had borne her own injuries without a murmur. "Is this Christianity?" she exclaimed. This seems to have aroused some sense of shame in her tormentors, for the martyrs were then led back to their prisons.

She had merely expressed what Avvakum also felt,

when he wrote that gentleness, not persecution, was the apostolic method of bringing back erring sheep to the fold. "They were trying to build up and strengthen the faith with the aid of whips, fire and gallows ! Which of the Apostles has taught them this ? I wot not. My Christ never commanded His disciples to act thus."

In the Council Chamber of the Tsar serious deliberations were carried on as to what was to be done with these obdurate heretics. The suggestion of the ecclesiastics that the Boyaryinia should be burnt at the stake was not at all favourably received by the boyars.

The Tsar even went so far as to send the Boyaryinia a conciliatory message, but every effort to settle the matter peaceably was unavailing ; and, finally, he gave orders to transfer her to a convent where she was to be strictly guarded and forced to attend the services—a new infliction for her. It led, however, only to a repetition of those scenes which had been enacted by her sister and had attracted so many sightseers. Now it was the Boyaryinia who was being dragged forcibly to church ; a sight which drew such large crowds that the Tsar decided to have her brought back to Moscow.

Once again history repeated itself. All her friends, both rich and poor, came to visit her, and even the elder sister of the Tsar began to intercede for her and to upbraid her brother for his cruelty, but he refused to listen to her appeals, and one after the other the three ladies were exiled to Borovsk, where they were kept in a dungeon. Their faithful friends did all they could to make life easier for them and Maria's brother

prevailed upon the guards to be lenient with their prisoners, thus enabling them to keep in constant communication with their fellow-believers ; and even Avvakum from his prison in far-off Pustotersk, managed to convey to her a letter of comfort and sympathy.

When news reached the Tsar of all this evasion of his orders, he had one of the servants of Maria's family put to the torture, in order to extract from him information regarding her nephew Rodion, who was suspected of being the go-between. The victim endured great suffering, but remained staunch and never disclosed the fact that the man in question was at that very moment lying hidden underneath the flooring.

The unhealthy and primitive conditions in which the Boyaryinia now found herself soon told upon her health, and feeling that her end was drawing near she expressed a wish to see once more her friend and spiritual Mother, Melania. This warm-hearted and undaunted woman, herself a fugitive, left her hiding-place and came to comfort her much-tried spiritual children. The Tsar soon heard of this circumstance, and promptly sent a messenger to investigate the matter, with the result that the officer, who had been so obliging as to let Melania pass, was degraded to the ranks and banished to a distant outpost. Enquiries were also made concerning those who had supplied the prisoners with food and clothing, and the ladies themselves were deprived of their devotional books and ikons. As if this were not enough, all their clothes, except one garment of each kind, were taken from them.

As a result of a second official investigation which

took place a few weeks later, the nun Justina, whom the two sisters had found in Borovsk on their arrival, was burned at the stake. The pit in which the sisters had hitherto been kept was filled in and a deeper one was dug, into which the Martyrs were thrown. The days which followed were worse than any they had passed through hitherto : all communication with the outside world was cut off and the confinement in the small, dark dungeon became more and more loathsome ; forced to live in the midst of filth in a fœtid atmosphere, sleepless nights were added to days of torment. Insufficiently supplied with food, they were left to die of slow starvation. Their physical suffering was intensified by the moral torment of not being able to perform their devotions in the prescribed manner, for to these pious women ritual and ceremonial were of the essence of religion, and it was terrible to them to be so restricted in space that they could not make the obligatory prostrations. Deprived of their rosaries, they were reduced to making knots in bits of string so as to check the number of their prayers.

After two and a half months of this slow torture, the Princess Ouroussov succumbed. As there was no one to minister to her, the Boyaryinia, in fulfilment of her sister's last request that she might be allowed to die according to the rules of the Church, repeated over her the prayer for the dying. The mortal remains of this one-time Court lady were buried without any ceremony within the prison grounds.

The authorities in Moscow, reckoning that this culmination of all her suffering would have a weakening effect upon the Boyaryinia's power of resistance,

tried once more to bring her into union with the Church, but the Imperial messenger who was sent to interrogate her, returned without having accomplished anything. This was the answer the martyr for her faith sent to the Tsar: "Even when I was living in quiet and comfort in my own house, I had no desire to join with you. How can you expect me, now that I have endured so much suffering for His sake, to separate myself from my good and altogether lovely Lord? My beloved sister, ally and fellow-sufferer, has gone before me to my Lord—yet a little while and I also shall depart to be with Him."

One thought, however, troubled the Boyaryinia; she confided it to her new companion, a nun who was also suffering for her faith and who had been placed in the pit when the Princess had been removed from it by death. Sadly the dying woman whispered to her friend: "It is not meet when the Lord comes to take my soul to Himself, that the body which they put into the womb of Mother Earth should be clothed in a soiled garment." Her last wish was gratified—the rough soldier who had been set to guard her, washed her single garment in the river. That same night the Boyaryinia Morozov died. Her body, swathed in sacking, was buried like a dog's in a hastily dug hole in a corner of the prison-grounds, beside the grave of her sister.

Meanwhile Avvakum, from behind his prison walls in Pustotersk was sending forth epistles to his scattered flock, the very guards themselves assisting in the transmission of these letters. Even the living tomb failed to silence the voice of the noble and fearless warrior for the Faith.

Many years passed away and the Empire underwent many changes, but political events left the lonely prisoner untouched. At last news reached Avvakum of the death of the Tsar Alexei Mikhailovitch. The old man, weakened by long years of suffering, made one more effort and wrote a petition to the new Tsar—but the only reply elicited by this somewhat incoherent epistle, which began in all humility but went on to speak of the late Tsar as “being in torment,” was a stern command from his son “to burn Avvakum and his comrades at the stake for their terrible blasphemy against the Imperial House.” At Court, unfortunately, a generation had arisen “that knew not Joseph,” and no personal links existed between Feodor Alexeivitch and the man who had been his father’s friend. To the Tsar, who was a pupil of the Kievite monks and had been brought up in the new school of thought, the attitude of the Old Believers was absolutely incomprehensible, and the slight cast upon his father’s memory by the old excommunicated priest only aggravated his offence in the eyes of his sovereign.

On April 1st, 1681, the sentence was carried out, and the noble life which had been spent in constant suffering came to an end amid the flames of burning faggots.

The irritation which may be felt by some people by the apparent unreasonableness of the Old Believers, who preferred death to conforming to what may appear trifling externals of ritual, can only be turned into sympathy when it is borne in mind that it was for a principle these people suffered and died—for what they considered the Truth. It is also only when we remember

the intensity of antagonism exhibited against all innovations, the depth of feeling aroused, and the power of persistent opposition displayed by these nonconformists with such magnificent energy and self-sacrifice, that we understand the tremendous odds against which Peter the Great had to fight when introducing his reforms. On the other hand this violence of opposition helps us to see why he had to use such drastic methods. The stately edifice of this Master-builder was threatened with the undermining of its foundations by a quicksand, for the Old Believers numbered adherents in every class of society, and his reforms, affecting as they did every side of national life, were a sufficient reason for a pious but ignorant people to consider the Tsar Antichrist, thus making it imperative for them to oppose his efforts.



LADIES DRIVING, 16TH CENTURY.

EPILOGUE



THE USPENSKI SOBOR OF MOSCOW.

RUSSIA has undergone many and great changes since those days in which the heroes of the foregoing stories lived, but because they were Russians of the Russians, their counterparts are still to be found among the subjects of the Tsar.

The leaders of Russia's Armies whom their men follow with love and devotion are of the same calibre as Vladimir, Alexander Nevski, Dmitri Donskoi, Kourbski, and Yermak. Russian women, gifted with the power of organization and administration of an Olga and of the two Princesses of Polotsk, are at present doing magnificent relief work among millions of homeless refugees, as well as taking their share of work in the hospitals and even on the battlefield.

Predslava has her special spiritual descendant in the Grand Duchess Elizabeth who has founded a religious order in Moscow, herself its first Abbess. Her ideal is to train girls to work among the sick and needy, and not merely to seek salvation in contemplative piety.

The monastic ideal, it is true, still survives in Russia, but there is found also the practical saintliness of a Sergei Radonejski coupled with the same fine sense for the supernatural.

Russia has also to-day many honest, fearless and able administrators like Sylvester, Adashev, Philip and Dionissi, though cruelty of the kind for which a Malyuta Skouratov or a Pashkov were notorious may still be practised by some governors and prison warders in distant Siberia. This proves the truth that absolute power over one's fellow-men is good for no one, and confirms the fact that now also "heaven is high and the Tsar far away."

One thing, however, has changed completely, and that is the attitude of opposition towards progress and learning, which so surprised the foreign observers as late as the end of the seventeenth century, and which led to such a dire cleavage as the Great Schism.

The Old Believers have survived in spite of centuries of persecution, and Avvakum and the Boyaryinia Morozov have had crowds following in their steps. These Russian nonconformists might well expect to be understood and appreciated by the British people, among whom religious conviction has always held such a high and honoured place. Yet the two leaders of the Russian Schism may perhaps appeal least of all to the ordinary reader, and a feeling of irritation against such "unreasoning obduracy" is likely to arise in the minds of many. These martyrs, however, were no more obstinate than the English martyrs under Mary, nor more uncompromising than John Knox, though the world may term their attitude "fanatical."

Avvakum and the Boyaryinia Morozov are the

prototypes of vast numbers of sectarians who have filled the ecclesiastical prisons of Russia, or have endured banishment to the Caucasus or to Siberia for their faith. It is this temperament which provides the material for the fighters for political liberty. From every class of society men and women have joined the ranks of this army, one and all willing to endure imprisonment and exile for the sake of their conscientious convictions. These people may be as obdurate as the Boyaryinia, as intransigent as the most extreme party politician of the present day, but they are all of them equally willing and eager to suspend, for the sake of serving their country, all party questions during the period of war !

As to the masses of Russia, they are no longer drunken and brutish, no longer voiceless, although at this actual time they are silently giving their lives for their Fatherland. Patiently they are enduring hardships and suffering ; simple and lovable, always able to understand and to accept as quite natural deeds done "for Christ's sake,"—deeds which, in the more sophisticated West of Europe, would be considered merely eccentric.

There still exists in Russia that direct simplicity of human relationships which makes it possible for the humblest subject of the Tsar to send a petition direct to him ; and which makes master and servant, squire and peasant, meet and talk as friends. Side by side there is, unfortunately, also that haughty overbearing behaviour of the officials towards the people so graphically described by Giles Fletcher in 1591.

Everybody has come across and likes the amiable, good-natured, "very charming" Russian of the Dmitri type, whose chief fault seems to be a happy-go-lucky

enjoyment of the present, without purposeful taking care of the morrow. Hence political or social emergencies find them unprepared, and valuable opportunities are frequently lost.

This war has produced many a patriot like Lyapounov, Minin and Pojarski ; and what the Russian cities tried to do in 1612, in a very small way, the Unions of the Zemstvos and of the Towns, the Red Cross and many other Societies are doing since the outbreak of the war on a gigantic scale. To cope adequately with the problem of having to care for millions of wounded men and homeless families of refugees, united and organized effort has proved of primary necessity, and to-day, as three hundred years ago, the nation is mobilizing "for Victory".

Finally, it is hoped that Russians of the present day in their loveliness, or even in their apparent unreasonableness, may become better understood by their British friends, if it is borne in mind that they are of the same flesh and blood with the Heroes, Saints and Sinners portrayed in this volume.



DETAIL OF THE KREMLIN IN 1600.

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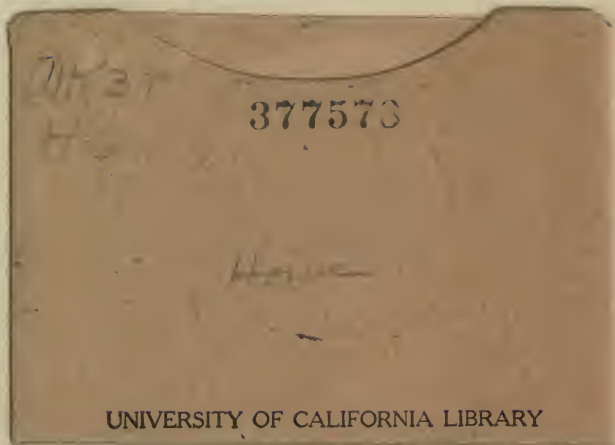
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